

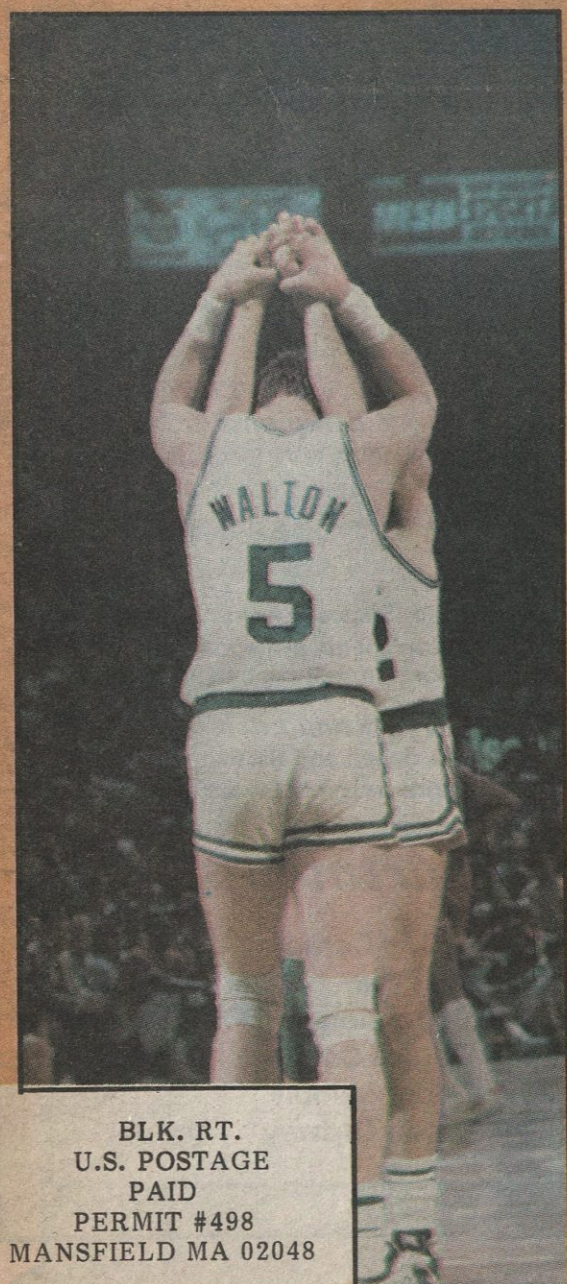
BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE

Volume 1, Issue 17
July 4, 1986



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How Sweet It Is!



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BOSTON CELTICS PRIDE

THE ARENA

More Than Interested Observers

Unforgettable. The hundreds of replays really did not tell the full story; Jerry Sichting and Ralph Sampson bumped near mid-court midway through the second quarter of Game 5 in Houston. Then they tangled in the low post--Sichting unable to move, caught among the taller, heavier mammoth centers and power forwards under the Rockets basket. Soon, a fearsome brawl broke out; at first it appeared Sichting might be hurt seriously, as the 7-4 Sampson threw roundhouse punches. Fortunately, Sichting protected himself, deflecting the wild swings.

Two deeply concerned spectators watched the melee--Joni Sichting (Jerry's wife) from her seat at the Summit, and Peggy Sichting (Jerry's mother) from her home via television, in Martinsville, Indiana.

"I don't know what I would've done if I were at the game," Peggy Sichting told Leigh Montville of *The Boston*

Globe in an interview. "I know I wouldn't have wanted to see what happened.

"He's had quite a few elbows hit him, his fair share, but that's part of the game of basketball. He's hit with elbows mostly because that's where his head happened to be, everyone else being that tall. This other thing (the fight), though, was different."

Joni Sichting, of course, was at the game in Houston. After a long protracted series of interviews with the media, Jerry Sichting exited the locker room, and walked down the hall. His wife hurried over to meet him.

"Are you OK?" She asked the player, and they embraced.

"Yeah. He didn't really hit me. I'm fine."

He was quickly pulled aside--another interview--private lives and public lives.

The Big O

Followers of the professional game in the sixties who were Celtics fans may have had a fantasy: If they could have chosen any

player to play on the Celtics, who would that player be? Undoubtedly that choice would have been the brilliant Oscar Robertson. Six-foot-five, 220 pounds, perfect moves, 25.7 ppg and 9.5 assists career averages. Bill Russell commented about Oscar Robertson, "You didn't play to defeat Oscar. You played to tie him."

Oscar Robertson was on hand at The Finals last week, as broadcaster for the Mutual Broadcasting System. He had some interesting things to say about the Finals and about the Celtics.

"The key to the series I think is the play of the guards. The Celtics' guards have a significant experience edge."

"Why does experience mean so much? At this time of year, experience means going out and setting up your offense. It means executing plays and creating your tempo."

"I don't think the Celtics team is the best ever. They are the biggest team inside, but they don't have the speed and shooting of earlier Celtics teams. Nor did they have Bill Russell."

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Funny how
someone so quiet
can make us
scream so loud.

He never yelled at his players.
He never ranted and raved.
He never blasted anyone in
the press.

And when asked about the
wins, this softly-spoken man simply
replied, Bird, Johnson, McHale,
Parish, Ainge, or he talked about the
guys off the bench.

Well, there's someone the
gentleman always forgot to mention.
Himself.

K.C., thank you.

Thank you for this glorious year,
and for disproving again that nice
guys finish last.



BANK OF BOSTON



Len Bias Death: A Tragedy for All of Us

By Bob Schron

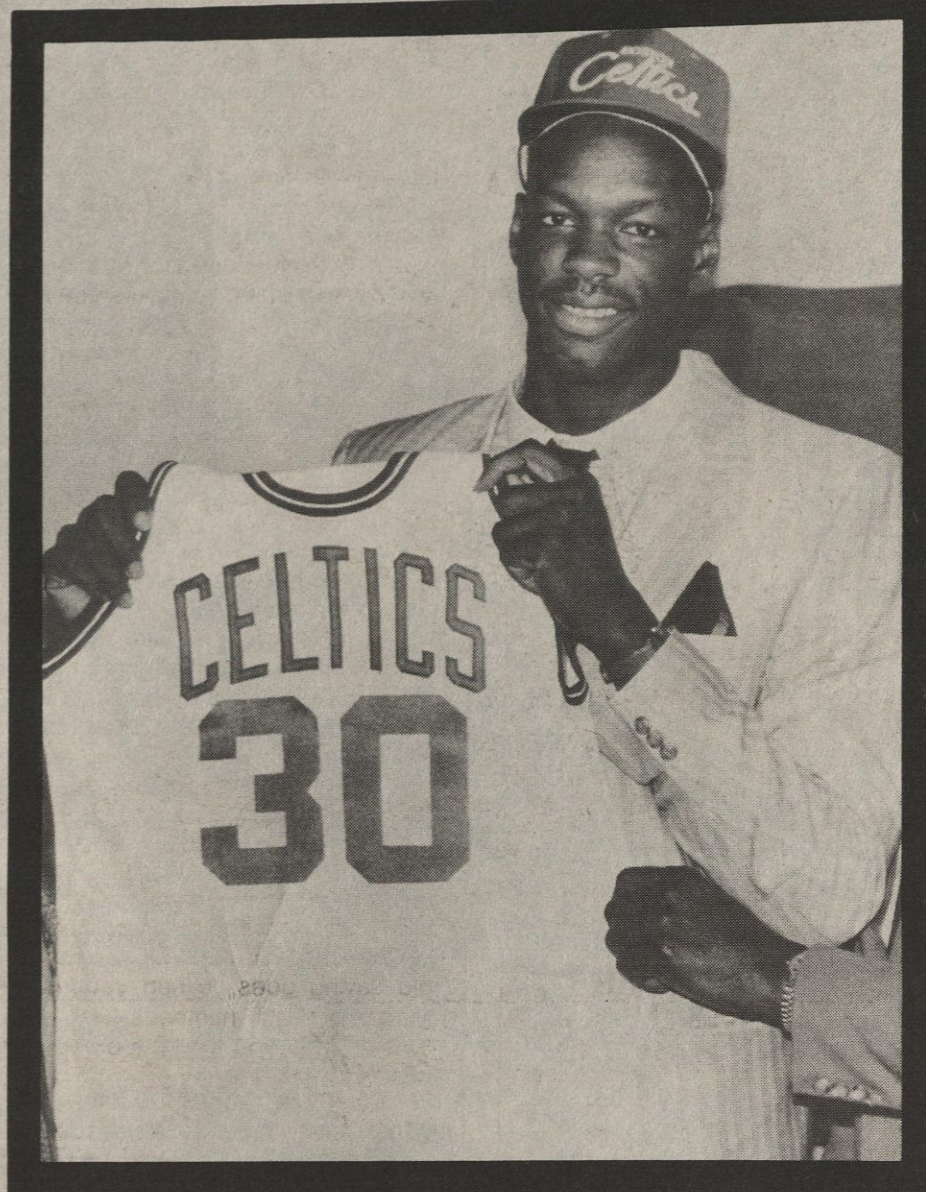
The tragedy of Len Bias's death affected Boston, New England, and Celtics fans everywhere, for the multitude of reasons which have dramatically altered the Celtics destiny for the next several seasons. Len Bias's basketball future was exciting, simply because it apparently was limitless: he jumped gracefully, understood the game specially, was a willing worker at his weaknesses.

But, of course, this happy combination of skills, robbed from us, is a minor factor for the kid, whose dream was fulfilled the day he was drafted by the Celts. Bias was coming home, in a sense; much is made of the term "Celtics Pride", perhaps because it is understood that the flip side of pride is Celtics "family". When you become a Celtic, Quinn Buckner explained last summer when he sensed he would not be returning, you become part of a family forever. Bias had become part of the Celtics family ironically already, one sensed, a special member, the youngest brother. And now we—all of us—are robbed.

It's a sad story. Three days earlier the Celtics scouting staff of Red Auerbach, Jimmy Rodgers, Ed Badger, K.C. Jones, Rick Weitzman, and Chris Ford had met for the final time in Auerbach's office. "There was a meeting of the minds," said Jim Rodgers. The choice was Bias. One was led to believe that a major reason for this choice was the personal impression Len had made on the brass when he had met with them during the Houston Finals. Other candidates had not made a similar impact.

On draft day, after the trades had been completed and the Cavs had made their choice of Brad Daugherty, Auerbach smiled. He immediately said: "After about five seconds of deliberation and no intrigue, the Boston Celtics select, from the University of Maryland, forward Len Bias!" Auerbach was wearing the same white loafers he had on the afternoon he drafted Larry Bird eight years ago. And there was a joy through the room that was only matched (in this writer's experience of ten years) the day the team selected the great Bird. When Kevin McHale was drafted, there was a trade involved, an unpredictability related.

Quickly that draft day, the media asked questions. We learned that Red had been watching Bias's development for three seasons. We learned that Red had had dinner with Len, his parents, and Maryland Coach Lefty Driesell after the kid's junior season, when Len was thinking of turning Pro. They decided that night that Lenny should stay for his senior season.



Lenny Dreamed of Being Part of Celtics Family.

"By staying in school," said Tom Newell, player personnel director of the Indiana Pacers, "Len went from the top eight in the draft to the top two."

"Lenny Bias," commented Jimmy Rodgers when asked about the strengths of his game, "is a Player."

The tragedy, which affects all of our hearts (and who more than his family's?): Lenny Bias was a player who captured our imagination, able to control his space on the floor, and make good things happen as a result, fun things. And now we are robbed of that player.

It became more real later that draft day. Bias had been in the middle of a series of taxing trips. He had been to the West Coast to meet with the Warriors, who owned the third choice last week. Then, upon deplaning, according to Bill Shelton of Advantage International who was representing the young player, Bias had spent all day with USA Today, cooperating on a feature. Over the weekend, there had been excitement, anticipation, planning. Then, he had

been on another airplane, headed to New York, for the draft.

He was excited. "I dreamed I had missed the plane," Bias said. "But then, I woke up, realized it would all be OK." After being interviewed in New York by several reporters, he was brought to Boston for another meeting with the local press.

Arguably few who were in the Boards and Blades club that afternoon could deny that Bias appeared to be flat out exhausted. He answered questions willingly, but briefly. Then the room would be silent; the assembled sensed the kid's fatigue, allowed him his space. Yet, Len cooperated fully. There were several TV shots, a radio interview, after these were through, he slumped over, but caught himself with two chairs. And he carried on, approaching the press session with class and professionalism.

He signed an autograph... "Len Bias 30."

Through it all, for whatever the reasons under Providence, we are robbed. As this is written, the cause

of death is unknown, and it's good it is and it's because they don't matter.

Len Bias had fulfilled his goal, his ambition, remarked Auerbach, and the President went on to declare he had never seen a happier person. "He was glowing."

"The sad part about it is he had realized his dream," said Tom Sanders.

"I've never heard such a cruel thing," said Bird. "I was looking forward to coming to rookie camp to have a chance to play with him."

"Distressed," said David Cowens, President of the New England Sports Museum.

It is easy to intellectualize and state that an Olympian, The Athlete, has been taken from us, before we had gotten to know him, before he had realized the fruits of his labors. But it's more than that, really. It gets back to family, because the reason we are effected is that the Celtics are special. They are unique because they bring in special people—good people. And they win with these good people. One sensed that this Michael Jordan-type player was one of these good people. And now he is robbed from us.

Len Bias, 6-8 210 pounds was born on November 18, 1963 in Landover Maryland. Bias was one of the most recruited athletes in the history of the greater Baltimore area, finally selecting Maryland after averaging 19.5 points and 12.6 rebounds in his senior season at Northwestern High School. In his post high school career, Bias was named MVP of the two most prestigious high school all-star contests: McDonald's Capital Classic and the Derby Classic in Louisville. He started the last six games of his freshman season at Maryland and from that point, became the leading performer on that team. Among his achievements: all-time leading scorer in University of Maryland history (2149 points, 81 more than Albert King); all-ACC three seasons; MVP of the ACC Tournament as a sophomore; leading scorer in the conference in his junior and senior seasons; named ACC Player of the Year as a senior, a season in which he scored 41 points against Duke, 35 against North Carolina, and 30 against Georgia Tech. In the NCAA tourney, he scored 57 points and pulled down 20 rebounds.

Bias's lone Boston appearance came in last summer's Red Auerbach Boston Celtics Rookie Camp. There, against rookies like Sam Vincent and veterans like Danny Ainge, he dominated, impressing all observers with shooting, rebounding, and jumping skills. His game was a special blend of power, grace, and desire.

Celtics Family Saddened by Bias Death

Lenny Bias's tragic death stopped instantly the anticipation, excitement, and hopes of the Celtics franchise. Two days after the Celtics and Lenny Bias began formulating plans together, Bias had died. Two days after the Bias family had begun setting out on a journey of fulfillment—Lenny playing professional basketball with the classiest franchise in all of sports—those plans had ended.

The gravest part about it all was that Bias openly admitted about his dream of playing for the Celtics. He had the talent, the willingness and desire, and the personality which made the Celtics extremely pleased—paralleling their feelings upon their landing and signing Larry Bird. Several members of the Celtics family alluded to this, especially Red Auerbach.

"I look at it this way. Len Bias fulfilled his goals. The biggest thing in his life was to be a Boston Celtic. The second biggest thing was to be the top draft choice of the Boston Celtics. He accomplished those goals."

"It is hard to figure out why things happen. I never dwell on that. People ask me about whether we can get compensation. That's the furthest thing from my mind. All I can think about is this kid and his family. Nice people. All of them, nice people."

K.C. Jones had met Bias on the latter's visits to Boston and was very impressed with the young player. "I was totally shocked. We had a chance to touch someone and develop a good relationship, and suddenly he's not there. The first thing I thought about when I heard was his family. How terrible it is for them. Len had fallen in love with the idea of being a Celtic. He was on top of the world. Then this."

A major reason the Celtics decided to draft Bias was Len's favorable impression at the meeting between the young man and the C's scouting braintrust of Auerbach, Jimmy Rodgers, Ed Badger, Jones, Rick Weitzman, and Chris Ford. Jimmy Rodgers spoke of this.

"We felt—and still do, that Len Bias was an extra-special player and person. Forget the basketball, that's immaterial. A tremendous emphasis is placed on the personality and character of the person you are drafting. And Len Bias was a blue-chip prospect as a young man."

"I don't know, it's just a tragic thing. A guy we had great hopes for... He had those same hopes... The most tragic thing is for him... and his family."

"The saddest fact is that we had a dramatic change of feeling, Lenny, the Celtics. On draft day, there was a strong feeling of exultation. The best



Lenny will be Missed.

player, a super person. Now, the deepest lull, and with no time in between. That's why this is an unbelievable tragedy."

"It's something of an unfortunate cliché but in sports you're trained to cope with lows. And with the Celtics, there aren't too many lows."

"This is the greatest tragedy."

Players expressed similar feelings. The camaraderie which develops among Celtic players—and most players on professional teams—is special, unique. There is an empathy among players; rookies—youngest members, young men—are learning the ropes, seeing the pro game for the first time. Even a player of Lenny Bias's extraordinary talents needs a form of coaching from his teammates. This is even more special on the Celtics. The Celtics are fine people.

Larry Bird is one of these. Bird is a magnificent basketball player—the best ever as defined by all-around skill. The reasons for this status is Larry, besides his skill, has a unique feel for people, a fine human spirit, a

boyish (still) love for the game. He loved the idea of playing with Bias.

"This is terrible news," said Bird. This is one of the cruelest things I've ever heard. I was really looking forward to coming to rookie camp and playing with him."

Others expressed these reactions.

"You think about a lot of things," said Rick Carlisle. "It makes you feel fortunate just to be alive, let alone that you're able to play a game which you love and also be paid for it."

"The guy was just so excited that everything he had dreamed about was coming true," said Danny Ainge, who had talked with Bias the day after the draft. "I joked with him when I saw him."

"When I heard about the news, I just couldn't believe it was true. Here was a guy I was just with the night before, laughing and smiling and sipping on 7-Up. At first, I thought it was just some bad practical joke. Then I knew there was no joke."

"I'm still waiting for someone to tell me it's a joke."

Kevin McHale said, "He had his whole life to live—and there's so much more to life than just playing basketball. It makes you realize how life depends on pure luck. Like the old saying goes, 'When your number's up, your number's up.' This really makes you take a look at how lucky you are."

Bob Ryan, Globe journalist wrote, "The Celtics loved Bias because he was a wonderful basketball player

and because he loved them back. Bias had made it clear that he didn't want to play anywhere else."

"He seemed like a fine young man," said Robert Parish. "He seemed like he wanted to play very badly for us. In a way, he's part of the team, and that makes you feel sad."

Sam Vincent knew Bias from the rookie camp of last summer, the camp which will now forever be known as the Bias Camp, the only time Lenny Bias played for the C's. "We had become real close," Vincent told Mike Carey of The Herald. "He was super, real down-to-earth, a real caring person, just a super person... You know about death and all of that, but it never involved someone I was close to. It's just really hard to accept. I still don't believe it. I don't want to believe it."

"It's a testament to his character that he wanted to come in and be a part of this organization," said M.L. Carr. "He was going to wear my number, 30, and I was proud to pass it on to a quality player."

"In a very real sense, he'll always be a true Celtic."

General Manager Jan Volk stated, "When I heard about it, there was utter disbelief. It had to be a cruel joke. Once it hit me that this was true, it made me feel sick. It bowled me over."

"It's impossible to even think about the effects on the franchise," concluded the GM, the day after the franchise received its most crushing defeat."

Sorrow is Universal

Coaches and players around the Atlantic Coast Conference were shocked and saddened at the death of former Maryland forward Len Bias, the Celtics number-one draft choice.

"We are all finite human beings, but to see a young man with so much promise die is particularly sad," North Carolina Coach Dean Smith said. "This is a terrible shock."

Coincidentally, Smith's daughter works in a bank with Bias' mother. Smith's daughter told the coach about Bias' death.

Smith will most remember Bias for a performance he put on against the Tar Heels last season. Bias scored a game-high 35 points, leading Maryland to a 77-72 upset win over North Carolina.

"Len put on one of the greatest performances I have ever seen by an opposing player when Maryland played in Chapel Hill," Smith said. "All we could do was congratulate him after the game. He certainly had the

respect of everyone in the North Carolina basketball program."

Just after the Celtics took Bias, Duke stalwart Johnny Dawkins, who was also taken in the first round, was engaging in some good-natured kidding with Bias. Dawkins was telling Bias he would be the NBA's Rookie of the Year.

"I am shocked," Dawkins said. "I just saw him on Tuesday and he was excited and so happy. A lot of people are going to miss him and I am one of them. I was kidding him about winning the NBA slam dunk contest. He was probably the best player in the draft. Lenny was special."

Said Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski of Bias, named the ACC Player of the year the last two seasons.

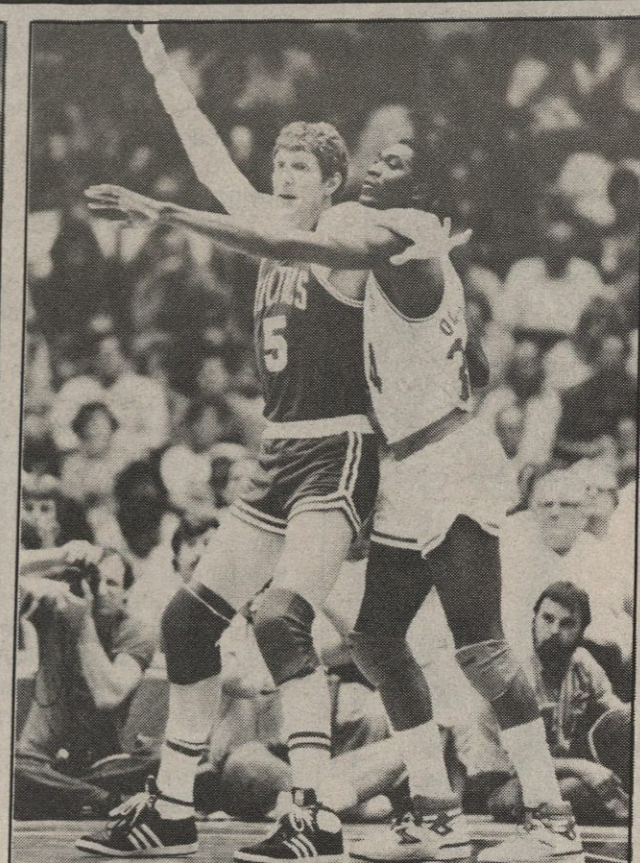
"I thought of Bias as being perfect," Krzyzewski said. "It's shock, it's shocking, especially if you consider that all of the athletes ever, he had got to be in the top percent as far as pure athletic ability. If it were a car accident or something you could believe it, but this is unbelievable."



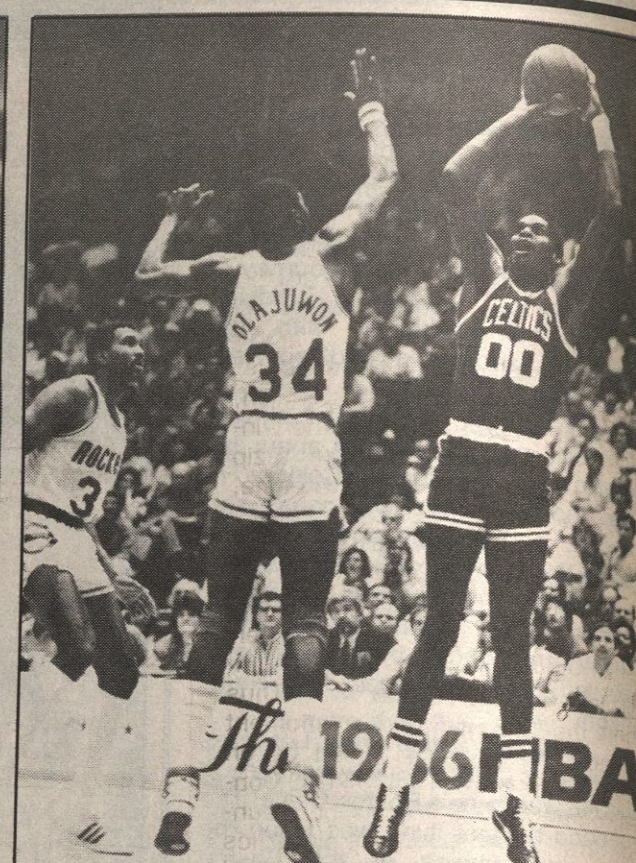
"Sweet, Sweet Sixteen"



D.J. led the Break.



Walton: Perfect Execution.



Parish: Came through when needed.

GAME 1: Boston 112 - Houston 100 at Boston

In the pre-game interviews, the talk was predictable, but telling. Coaches K.C. Jones and Bill Fitch spoke of paying more attention to their own respective games, and not thinking about adjustments. In other words, which team would force the other team to adjust. Yet in the moments shortly before tapoff, Fitch confided, "our problem is that we are facing a team which might be at their peak collectively for one season."

The early moments of the series were jittery--yet they informed the order of the remainder of the Finals. Early turnovers, struggles on the defensive end, a standoff, and then suddenly, Bird stepped back for a 3-point field goal. On the next possession, he backed the defense up, and hit a quick turnaround. In a matchup of players of the magnitude of Olajuwon, Dennis Johnson, Robert Reid, Robert Parish, Bill Walton, and others, Bird consistently made the difference.

Game 1 was tense throughout. An early turning point was Ralph Sampson picking up his 3rd personal foul at 7:15 of the 1st period (on a Bird driving left-hander). The 7-4 Rocket was never a factor. Yet, a characteristic of the Rockets' Twin Tower season has been their ability to play effectively when Sampson or Olajuwon were out (both were injured for stretches of the season). Game One fit the pattern; Olajuwon scored

fifteen 2nd quarter points. Houston cut a 38-28 Celtics lead to a manageable 61-59 count at the half.

The rally would halt there. At the beginning of the series, the Celtics felt they could force both Olajuwon and Sampson into cheap fouls. They also felt they could outdefend Houston, and this would in turn trigger their own running game. Boston rallied throughout the final half; Bird consistently found the open man, Danny Ainge and Dennis Johnson ran the break, and the inside defense proved dominating. Boston raced to a 91-76 margin in the 3rd period and went on to a convincing 112-100 win.

KEY MOMENT: The game continued close throughout the midway point of the 3rd period, when Akeem Olajuwon picked up his 4th personal foul. The score was 75-72 Boston, 5:21. Without Olajuwon's presence, or his spinning moves inside, Houston was never the same, the Celtics never more confident. Johnson made a steal and fed to Ainge on the transition. Bird stole and passed to Ainge again. Parish blocked a shot and Johnson again led the break. And the Celtics had the first game.

GAME 2: Boston 117 - Houston 95 at Boston

"His greatest asset is his very accurate jumper. He hits from everywhere. He has unlimited range. A guy who shoots as well as Larry Bird creates all kinds of problems for the defense."--Robert Parish

The Celtics held their home court advantage with a fiery victory--earned in stifling heat at the Boston Garden. They were led by the play of Bird and his frontcourt running mate, Kevin McHale. The latter has proven his unequalled moves inside repeatedly throughout the season. In the title series, he dominated Ralph Sampson, this game tallying 25 on 9-14 FG shooting.

Yet, when Larry Bird establishes a rhythm, apparently there is nothing to do to counter him. By halftime of this game, Bird had scored 20, with two 3-pointers, with 2 steals and a block. He scored seven quick points in the 2nd quarter to spark a surge, increasing the lead to ten points. One play would demonstrate the Celtics' poise, and their absolute confidence in their Captain. At the end of the 3rd period, the Celtics ran the clock down for a final shot. It was the isolation play, with Bird backing Rodney McCray down on the right sideline. He backed in, head looking up quickly, the clock edging toward zero. As the clock reached its end, Bird made his move--a step left, an underhanded scoop beneath McCray's perfect position. The score read 91-76 at the end of three. And Boston was never headed.

KEY MOMENT: From the depths of the Celtics bench, Houston native Greg Kite emerged, in the 2nd quarter. K.C. Jones, wary of the foul problems (McHale and Parish with 2) of his big men, sent Kite into the game at 7:54. Immediately the Celtics defense tightened; Bird

moved in for a steal, Kite shut off Olajuwon, and ran the Nigerian up and down the court. Sampson replaced Akeem and when Bill Walton replaced Kite, the Celtics led by nine, 48-39. It was the perfect execution of the role, emblematic of this team all season.

GAME 3: Houston 106 - Boston 104 at Houston

The Celtics had dominated the third periods of the opening two games of the series, and it was a problem for Bill Fitch. "We have had a problem with that," acknowledged Fitch. "The difficulty is persuading the team we have a legitimate chance to win." But if confidence was lacking, Akeem Olajuwon was interpreting the situation differently at practice the day before Game 3. "We will come out to play tomorrow--from the beginning, in the 3rd period, the whole game."

"You think they will sweep us? You must be kidding. There is no way," Akeem repeated constantly.

The great center finally received help from frontcourt partner Sampson who scored 24 and pulled down 22 tempestuous rebounds. But there were two other major factors for the Rockets. One was Bill Fitch's decision to switch Robert Reid onto Larry Bird, who was again outclassing the field (19 at the half, with 6 rebounds and 6 assists). The other was the entry of Mitchell Wiggins (replacing an ineffective Lewis Lloyd) in to the game, in tandem with Alan

Leavell. The Rockets went to a running lineup at the point, and this seemed to arouse the emotional Reid. The Rockets rallied from the middle of the 3rd period on--Boston had swept off on a 17-3 run, behind the guard play of Dennis Johnson and Danny Ainge. Houston's running game--which Jones and staff had neutralized to this point in the series--brought them back into the contest. But the Celtics felt they had the game in their hands. Despite the Houston intensity, despite the inspiration of the Summit crowd, the Celtics still led by 102-94 with 3:41 remaining.

But this was when Houston, at the brink, made a fabled last-ditch power drive. Behind Sampson, Olajuwon, and Wiggins--who tipped in the winner--the Rockets ran off a 9-zip spurt, and went on to win the game, 106-104.

KEY MOMENT: For some time now, a sore spot shared among coaches and media alike has been the inaccessibility of the referees to--understandably--criticism, and not so intelligibly--communication. Thus when the 3rd game's key moment arrived, and it was signaled by an "inadvertant whistle" by Jake O'Donnell, confusion and frustration mounted. Trailing 105-104, the Celtics worked the ball around for a final shot. But the play broke down, and



Sighting: Excellent Role Player.

with the 24-second clock winding down, Robert Parish rose up for a shot in the lane. Faintly at courtside, a whistle stopped play. For a long moment, confusion reigned as O'Donnell and Joe Crawford conferred. The decision was that there had been a mistaken stoppage of play. No call. The final seconds unravelled--a jump ball, a Houston free throw, another Celtic turnover. And a new series.

GAME 4: Boston 106 - Houston 103 at Houston

It was late one night in Houston--the longest road trip of the year, to Coach Jones' chagrin. But he was making the best of it, enjoying a drink at the hotel bar with his lovely wife, Ellen Thomas-Jones. A writer leaned over and said, "You'll enjoy that drink more with two wins (The C's were up, 2-0 then). "No," K.C. corrected. "One more, right now." Jones' strategy was to get the needed one win in the 2-3-2 scheduling for the Finals.

In the series' best game, the Celtics weathered another animated Rocket effort to win, 106-103. Sampson picked up from Sunday's performance and scored 21 1st half points, but his night he was matched

Continued on Next Page

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McHale: Had the inside moves.

by a scorching Robert Parish, who had played poorly in the previous game. "One thing you know about Robert," said Bird afterward. "He'll always bounce back." Parish finished with 22 points, 10 rebounds, and 3 blocks.

The heroes throughout the night were Parish and Dennis Johnson. Johnson's scoring through the 3rd period kept Boston slightly in front, and Parish fought Olajuwon and Sampson to a standstill.

But in the end, the recognition went to Bird and Bill Walton. Walton entered the game in the final 3:29, made two key assists and a vital basket. Bird fired home a crushing 3-point fielder with 2:26 to break a 101 tie, and putting the Celtics up for good.

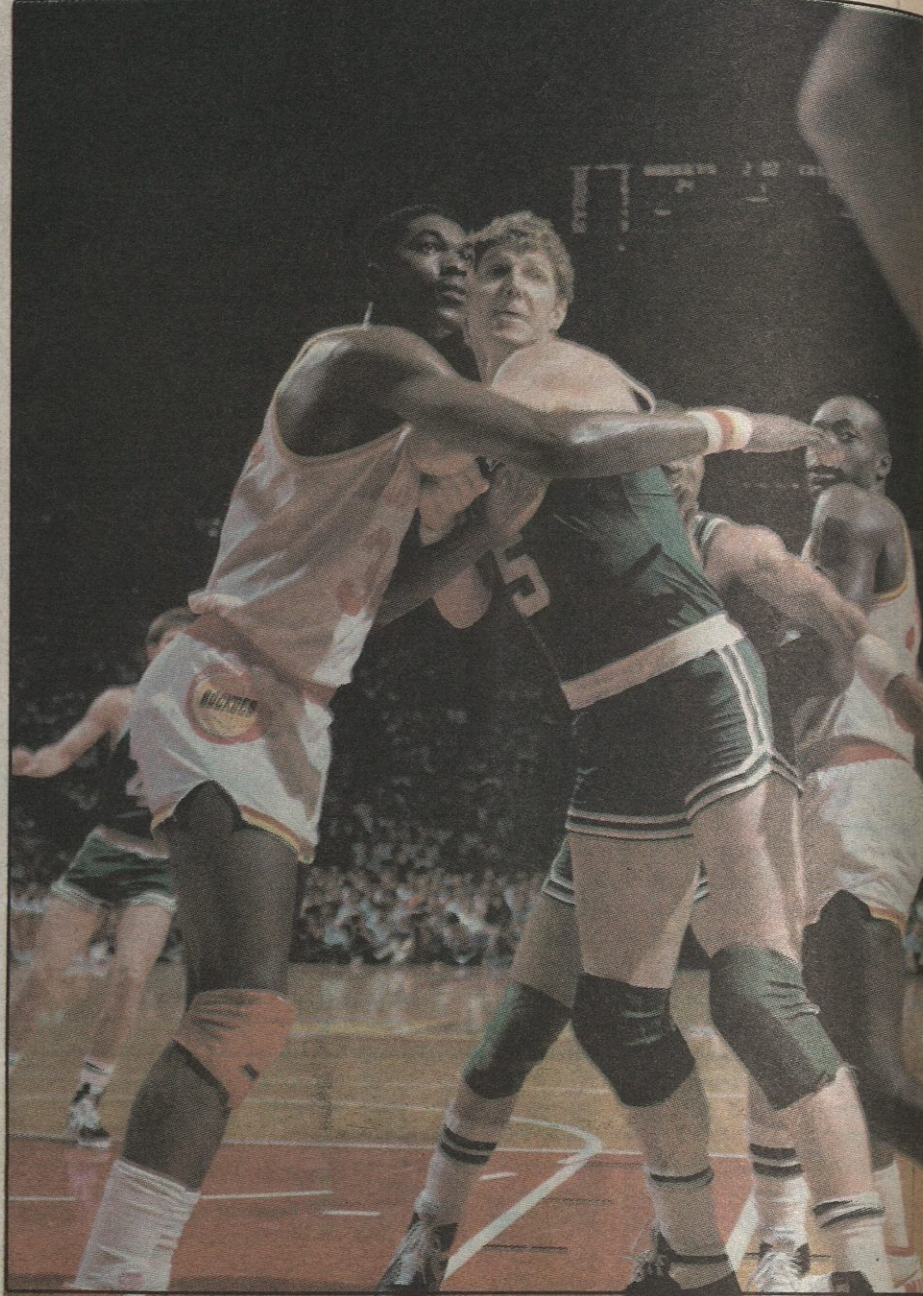
KEY MOMENT: Robert Parish played 40 of his best playoff minutes ever... but with 3:29 remaining, the energies were depleted. K.C. Jones peered down the bench, and signaled for Bill Walton. The redhead was READY. "You wait all year long for situations like this," claimed Walton later. Indeed. In the final minutes, Walton finished up what the Celtics started and created; he made an assist to

Bird for the 3-point field goal. He directed the players on a last moment improvised play, then crashed through for the critical offensive rebound to ice the game, 106-103. Last year, he said, he was driving somewhere in Mexico during the NBA finals. This year, after the game, "We're close to the NBA title--and it's an unbelievable feeling."

GAME 5: Houston 111 - Boston 96 at Houston

The Rockets avoided elimination with a powerful running game and the impetus gained from a 2nd quarter brawl, 111-96. The altercation involved Ralph Sampson and Jerry Sichting; in an unprecedented move, Referee Jack Madden, stating he "had no choice", ejected Sampson. Usually, a player as important as Sampson is spared removal, especially since the Rockets were behind in the series, 3-1.

The Celtics began the evening strongly, weathering the Mitchell Wiggins led rally in the 1st quarter and playing evenly. But with the score 34-33 Houston at 9:40, Sampson and Sichting collided near the key area, and then exchanged



Olajuwon and Walton: Muscle versus Muscle.

elbows in the low post. Abruptly, Sampson swung at Sichting, and the emotion of the entire series took on the form of a mass of Celtics and Rockets in a warring mob. Walton tackled Sampson; then, the fight reached the front row of the stands. The fight lasted seventeen minutes.

When play resumed, Bird said later, "We didn't play well." And the Rockets, led by Wiggins, Olajuwon, Reid, and Jim Peterson, outscored Boston 13-4 over the next 4:44. They sustained the (basketball) assault in the 3rd quarter, extending the lead to 86-65.

"We just said the hell with it," said Bird, wearing a mask of anger. We'll play them considerably better back in Boston."

KEY MOMENT: The Fight.

GAME 6: Boston 114 - Houston 97 at Boston

The Celtics won their (sweet) 16th franchise championship by easily defeating the Rockets at the Garden. For the Celtics, it was their record shattering 50th home victory against 1 loss this season. Bird later

offered he had never been as high for a game (because of the fight and the magnitude of the contest). He played superbly, scoring 29 with 12 assists and 11 rebounds. Kevin McHale also scored 29, including the game-determining inside points. The Celtics stormed to an early 22-10 lead, forcing Bill Fitch to use a pair of early timeouts. After Houston rallied behind the persistent ball-hawking and dunking of Akeem Olajuwon (the Rockets' best player throughout the series), Boston ran away and hid. Permanently.

The images would remain from this final game, a stunning color photograph of a sweet season. There was Parish storming the parquet for a fast break dunk. Walton connecting on a banker. DJ scoring the transition jumper when all around him were tiring. Danny Ainge is ice in these fire games-- he connected on 7 of 9 from the field. The Celtics would run up a 30 point lead, wearing the white uniforms.

Finally (of course) there was a magnificent Bird. Walton: "When he was most exhausted, out of nowhere, Larry got that 3-point look in his eyes. The final memory: Bird grabbed an errant pass, and swerve dribbled into



Bird scored from everywhere.

the deepest left corner. His first coach Fitch watched nearby, as Coach Jones observed from down the sideline. In super slow motion, with the 24-second clock at 2, Bird released a step-back 3-point field goal, feathery release. Swish. And the finale.

KEY MOMENT: Houston rallied from what appeared to be a 1st round

knockout and closed the gap to 24-23, behind Reid and Olajuwon, at 1:37 of the first. Then in quick succession, Walton reverse dunked, McHale hit a 12-foot turn, Bird scrambled for a baseline drive. Soon, McHale would toss in 10, Bird four more and the Celtics were flying, 49-34. Jones, continuing to allow his players the freedom to play, had used but one 20-second timeout.

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Ainge was the Ice.

Celtics Basketball is a Family Affair



Nancy was Outstanding.

The opening game of the 1986 NBA Final Series was a double thrill for the family of Celtics' center Robert Parish. Not only did the Chief lead the team to a 112-100 win over the Rockets with 23 points, but his wife Nancy got the series off to a rousing start with a flawless rendition of the National Anthem before an excited crowd at the Boston Garden.

Nancy, who had been studying singing for years before kicking off her promising career in a debut this Spring, was joined in her Anthem performance by the vocal group "Hawkeye".

June 26, 1986 was a memorable day for the talented Parish family.



"Celtics Pride Day" - Boston Style

The City of Boston celebrated the NBA Champion Boston Celtics with a major parade, June 17. An estimated one million people lined the streets to express their appreciation for the Celtics. Boston won the NBA title with a 6-game Finals victory over the Houston Rockets. They defeated Houston, 114-97, on June 8, to complete a record shattering season.

The City declared the day, "Celtics Pride Day", a tribute to the characteristic which has defined the play of the franchise throughout its 40-year existence. The Celtics' ratio of championships is the best in professional sports.

The parade was capped by an official ceremony at City Hall, facing Government Center in Boston. Johnny Most emceed, introducing the entire team, as well as owners Donald Gaston and Alan Cohen (Paul Dupee was not present), President Red Auerbach, and General Manager Jan Volk. The players all spoke, with the exception of Dennis Johnson. Robert Parish thanked the assembled, asking that they give themselves a round of applause.

"You earned it. You deserve it," said Parish. Larry Bird, accepting the trophy as Captain, reiterated the idea.

Red Auerbach stated about the



former draft choice of the Celtics and now Boston Mayor Ray Flynn: "Just think. If we had decided to keep Ray Flynn as a player on the Celtics, Flynn might have been Coach of the Celtics, and K.C. Jones would now be Mayor of Boston!"

"And this championship is the Sweetest of all!", stated Auerbach of the 16th title, acclaimed throughout the city as "Sweet Sixteen."

The conduct of the crowd, a subject feared because of disastrous parades in Detroit (1984) and Montreal last month was generally very commendable. Only 20 to 25 people were arrested; also, there were a small amount of injuries to people, expected, because of the crowding.

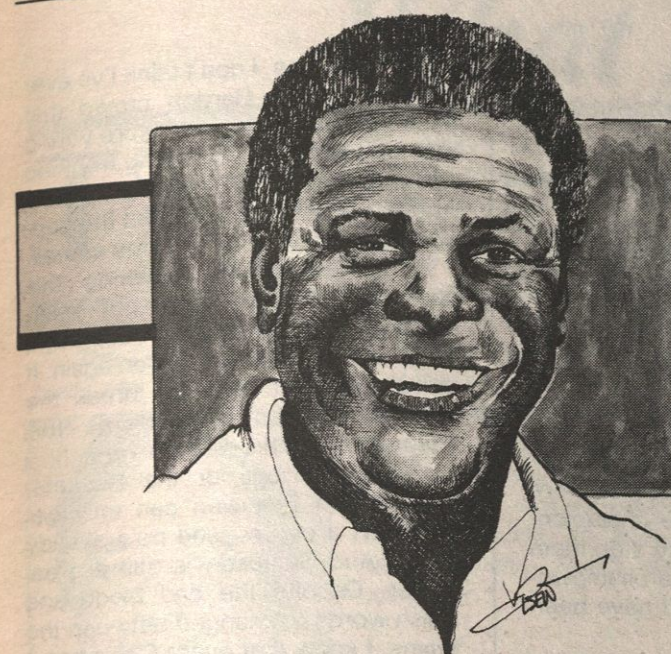
Bird poked fun at the jubilant crowd.

"The players, coaches and the organization would like to thank the Boston police for doing a heck of a job, because any time you're around a bunch of animals, you've gotta have protection."

"But this one's sweet this year."

Bird concluded with a thank you.

"You've made my day...go ahead, you've made my day. We're very proud. We as a team feel we've got the greatest team ever assembled here. Hopefully, we can prove it by getting back-to-back championships."



K.C.s Corner

child Christopher, up at 6 a.m. every day. But we made it---with the help (invaluable) of my wife, Ellen. She's a special lady. She helped me.

We would combat the pressures of the job in different ways. We went out to dinner and unwound. I sang---even after losses. I hate to lose as much as anybody---more. But you must get away. I enjoy playing golf, although this is not possible playing this sport in the north.

During the playoffs I ran more difficult practices, sensed that I was perhaps harder than ever on the team. The reasoning was fairly logical; the more a team advances in the post-season, the more demanding the competition. We have a team of self-motivators, maybe the highest. But you cannot take anything for granted. Ever. So, when we began deciphering the code, finding our path to the title, (I thought we were closing in when we held the

We Achieved Our Goals

I'm very, very pleased about the season, a year in which we fulfilled all of our playing goals. We had the great regular season, we had the higher level of play during the playoffs, and we now have our 16th franchise championship. This, the greatest Celtics team ever.

We had a great number of high points this season, but as a coach, I designate two. The first was our west coast trip in February, when we really came together as a team. This, despite a sudden rash of injuries; on that trip we lost Scott Wedman, Kevin McHale, and Larry Bird (ejection). But we played on gamely, defeating Portland, Los Angeles, and Golden State in a tough, competitive stretch. This, for me, stands out as a highlight of the season.

A second highlight was the development of Danny Ainge as a bonafide great player. A great Celtic. As a coach, I appreciate the piece of work he turned in on the defensive end. As a coach, I respect the way he continued to grow as a player, as his confidence grew. His reactions on the defensive end are second to none. This is what makes coaching gratifying---when this player is able to improve, feel that self-belief, see the game with all six senses. At the professional level, if a player is able to develop his game, the intensity of that progression is a sheer joy to behold.

Personally, the joy of my profession comes from the type of team we had this year. I am asked at times if I mind that the team receives the recognition, instead of me. I perceive my job this way: blending personalities, seeing the game, seeing people coming into the game at the right times, seeing what needs to be done, dealing with players. I do not control my team; I give direction. I work for less control from the bench. The players have to have control: for display, for them to use their brains, for them to use their creativity.

What drives me as a coach? The



Danny Ainge: A Bonafide Great Player.

love of the game, the love of the role. I would love to see perfection out there, but this does not work if you attempt to drive players with a perfectionist attitude. The ideal is a balanced, sensible approach. The game belongs to the players. Their minds. Their abilities. A coach directs that. And is watchful over player-player relationships. Recognition? I do not seek that out. How can I seek that out? The very term "seeking", implies that this is something out of your control. No.

My home life this season was something of a matter of chaos. We had our whole home re-done. Every day there were major renovations: we did the roof, moved the sides of the house out, redecorated. And there I was, flying off on road trips constantly. And there was the young

1985-86 Championship Box Scores

HOUSTON (100) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp McCray 42-10-14 0-1 0-1 3-2 20 Olaiuwon 38-14-23 5-9 7-12 2-5 33 Sampson 27-11-10 0-0 0-0 7-7 10 Lloyd 28-2-5 0-0 1-2 1-1 4 Reid 40-7-15 2-2 1-5-8 1-16 Petersen 28-4-9 0-0 0-4 1-3 8 Wiggins 18-3-7 0-0 2-5 2-3 8 Leavell 9-3-6 1-2 0-0 1-1 8 Elhio 4-1-1 0-0 0-0 1-0 2 McDowell 2-0-1 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 Harris 2-0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 Walters 2-0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 TOTALS 240-45-95 9-16 14-40 27 100 Percentages: FG--47.4, FT--56.3, 3-P--50.0 (Leavell 1-2, Bird 0-3). Rebounds: Off--14, Def--26, Team--14. Blocked shots: 7 (Olaiuwon 3, Petersen, Sampson, Elhio, Harris). Turnovers: 16 (Sampson 4, McCray 3, Lloyd 3, Olaiuwon 2, Reid, Petersen, Wiggins, Leavell). Steals: 11 (McCray 2, Sampson 2, Olaiuwon, Lloyd, Reid, Wiggins, Leavell, McDowell, Elhio).	HOUSTON (95) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp McCray 37-5-11 0-0 1-3 5-4 10 Olaiuwon 37-8-16 5-10 3-10 3-4 21 Sampson 32-7-14 4-6 3-8 1-2 18 Lloyd 21-4-9 0-0 0-1 3-4 8 Reid 33-3-10 0-0 1-3 5-3 8 Petersen 15-3-4 0-0 1-2 1-3 8 Wiggins 28-3-12 2-5 5-8 3-3 8 Leavell 17-2-7 0-0 1-3 3-1 5 Elhio 12-2-6 2-3 1-3 0-0 0 McDowell 3-0-2 0-0 1-1 0-0 0 Harris 3-1-1 0-0 2-2 0-0 0 Walters 7-0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 TOTALS 240-38-92 18-27 19-44 27 95 Percentages: FG--41.3, FT--66.7, 3-P--50.0 (Leavell 1-2, Reid 0-1). Rebounds: Off--19, Def--25, Team--13. Blocked shots: 4 (Sampson, Olaiuwon, Harris, Walters). Turnovers: 13 (Lloyd 4, Reid 2, Wiggins 2, Olaiuwon, Sampson, Petersen, Harris, McDowell). Steals: 9 (McCray 2, Sampson 2, Olaiuwon, Lloyd, Reid, Wiggins, Petersen).	BOSTON (104) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp Bird 45-10-26 5-5 4-15 11 25 McHale 44-12-19 4-6 7-11 1 4 28 Parish 25-3-15 2-2 3-4 2 4 8 Ainge 46-6-11 0-0 1-5 3 13 Johnson 41-6-17 8-8 3-5 7 2 20 Walton 20-5-7 0-0 4-8 2 4 10 Kile 7-0-0 0-0 0-2 0 5 Sicking 9-0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 Thirkill 3-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 TOTALS 240-42-94 19-21 22-53 28 104 Percentages: FG--43.8, FT--90.5, 3-P--50.0 (Ainge 1-2, Bird 0-3). Rebounds: Off--22, Def--31, Team--4. Blocked shots: 4 (McHale 2, Walton, Johnson). Turnovers: 19 (Parish 6, McHale 5, Bird 3, Ainge 2, Johnson 2, Thirkill). Steals: 12 (Bird 4, Ainge 4, McHale 2, Johnson 2).	BOSTON (108) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp Bird 47-9-17 2-2 0-9 10 2 21 McHale 43-8-13 3-4 3-9 0 4 19 Parish 40-10-15 2-3 5-10 0 0 22 Ainge 33-4-9 0-0 1-4 5 3 4 Johnson 47-8-15 5-6 2-4 3 22 Walton 19-5-5 0-0 1-4 1 3 10 Sicking 18-2-6 0-0 0-0 2 1 4 Kile 1-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 TOTALS 240-45-78 14-17 11-40 23 106 Percentages: FG--57.7, FT--82.4, 3-P--50.0 (Bird 1-3, Johnson 1-2, Sicking 0-1). Rebounds: Off--11, Def--29, Team--7. Blocked shots: 6 (Parish 3, McHale 3). Turnovers: 15 (McHale 5, Ainge 4, Bird 2, Parish 2, Johnson, Walton). Steals: 8 (McHale 3, Ainge 3, Bird, Johnson).	BOSTON (96) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp Bird 44-12-23 9-10 2-8 1 3 33 McHale 22-1-8 2-2 0-3 1 0 4 Parish 33-4-9 0-0 1-4 5 3 4 Johnson 39-5-12 3-3 3-5 4 5 13 Walton 28-2-8 2-2 2-6 0 5 6 Sicking 16-2-4 0-0 0-0 2 1 4 Kile 6-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 1 0 Thirkill 3-0-2 1-2 0-0 0 0 1 Vincent 3-2-5 0-0 0-0 0 0 1 Carlisle 3-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 2 0 TOTALS 240-34-84 27-31 10-27 20 96 Percentages: FG--40.7, FT--87.1, 3-P--50.0 (Bird 1-3, Ainge 0-1, Johnson 0-1, Thirkill 0-1). Rebounds: Off--10, Def--27, Team--11. Blocked shots: 7 (Parish 3, McHale 2, Ainge, Walton). Turnovers: 18 (Johnson 5, Ainge 3, Bird 2, McHale 2, Parish 2, Walton 2, Sicking 2). Steals: 6 (Ainge 2, Walton 2, Johnson, Vincent).	HOUSTON (97) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp McCray 33-6-11 4-6 2-4 4 2 16 Sampson 38-4-12 0-0 4-10 5 8 Olaiuwon 37-6-14 7-10 4-13 0 5 19 Lloyd 24-5-11 2-2 0-1 6-4 12 Reid 33-13-22 2-2 2-6 2 12 Wiggins 22-2-7 0-0 0-0 3-3 4 Petersen 20-1-6 1-2 3-7 2-4 3 Leavell 11-2-2 0-0 1-1 1 7 Harris 12-3-5 0-0 2-1 1-0 6 Elhio 2-3-3 0-0 0-0 0-0 0 McDowell 2-1-1 0-0 1-1 1 1 Walters 2-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 0 TOTALS 240-38-89 20-28 17-44 21 97 Percentages: FG--42.7, FT--71.4, 3-P--50.0 (Leavell 1-3, Reid 0-1, Wiggins 0-1). Rebounds: Off--17, Def--27, Team--10. Blocked shots: 3 (McCray, Sampson, Walters). Turnovers: 17 (Olaiuwon 5, McCray 4, Lloyd 3, Reid 2, Sampson, Leavell, Elhio). Steals: 10 (Olaiuwon 4, Reid 2, Leavell 2, Petersen).
BOSTON (112) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp McHale 40-8-12 5-8 2-4 3 21 Bird 44-8-18 5-6 1-13 4 21 Parish 36-11-18 1-3 1-4 1 0 23 D.Johnson 41-6-12 6-10 1-11 8 1 19 Ainge 40-9-16 0-0 2-3 7 5 18 Walton 18-5-5 0-0 2-8 2 10 Sicking 11-0-1 0-0 1-1 1 2 Kile 3-0-0 0-0 1-1 0 0 Thirkill 3-0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 Vincent 4-0-1 0-0 0-0 0 0 Carlisle 2-0-0 0-0 0-0 0 0 TOTALS 240-47-84 17-27 10-42 35 112 Percentages: FG--56.0, FT--43.0, 3-P--50.0 (Johnson 1-2, Bird 0-2). Rebounds: Off--10, Def--32, Team--8. Blocked shots: 5 (McHale 2, Parish 2, Walton). Turnovers: 17 (Bird 4, Johnson 4, McHale 3, Ainge 2, Parish, Walton, Kile, Vincent). Steals: 15 (Bird 4, Johnson 4, Ainge 3, Thirkill 2, Walton, Vincent).	BOSTON (117) min m-a m-a o-1 a-pf tp McHale 35-9-14 7-8 3-7 4 2 25 Bird 44-12-19 4-4 2-8 7 31 Parish 32-4-14 0-0 4-7 1 2 8 Johnson 42-4-12 10-2 2-7 4 18 Ainge 27-6-11 2-2 0-3 6 5 15 Walton 15-1-4 0-0 1-6 1 0 2 Sicking 22-5-8 0-0 2-7 2 2 Kile 11-2-2 0-0 1-3 1 3 4 Thirkill 4-1-1 0-0 0-0 1 1 2 Vincent 3-0-4 0-0 1-1 2 0 6 Carlisle 3-1-1 0-0 0-0 1 1 2 TOTALS 240-45-90 23-24 14-43 28 117 Percentages: FG--50.0, FT--95.8, 3-P--50.0 (Bird 3-5, Ainge 1-2, Johnson 0-2). Rebounds: Off--14, Def--29, Team--9. Blocked shots: 8 (McHale 2, Bird 2, Parish 2, Walton, Kile). Turnovers: 12 (Johnson 4, Bird 3, McHale 2, Ainge 2, Walton). Steals: 9 (Bird 4, Parish 2, Johnson, Ainge, Kile).	Boston 29 30 25 20-104 Houston 33 29 18 26-106 Technical fouls: Boston 2 (Kile, 03, 2nd; illegal defense, 528, 3rd; Houston 1 (coach, Fitch, 432, 2nd). Illegal defense: Boston 2. Officials: Jake O'Donnell, Joe Crawford.	Boston 30 33 20-108 Houston 30 34 21 18-103 Technical fouls: None. Illegal defense: Houston 1. Attendance: 16,016. Time of Game: 2:10. Officials: Darrell Garretson, Earl Strom.	Boston 28 19 18 31-96 Houston 26 32 28 25-111 Technical fouls: Boston 1 (Johnson, 934, 2nd; Houston 1 (Sampson, 940, 2nd; Olaiuwon, 130, 2nd). Illegal defense: Houston 1. Attendance: 16,016. Time of Game: 2:25. Officials: Jack Madden, Hugh Evans.	Boston 23 15 23 36-97 Houston 29 26 27 32-114 Technical fouls: Houston 2 (coach, Fitch, 608, 2nd; illegal defense, 329, 3rd). Illegal defense: Boston 1. Houston 2. Attendance: 14,890. Time of Game: 2:19. Officials: Darrell Garretson, Jake O'Donnell.

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M. L. Carr

Lenny Would Have Fit in Well!

I am obviously very saddened by the death of Len Bias. I saw him play in college many times, and it was easy to see that he was a great player. Red Auerbach said Bias was the best player in the draft, which has to tell you something about his talent.

Bias also was a nice young man who would have fit in quite well with

the Celtics franchise, on and off the floor.

Len's death hits me even harder for one more reason: He would have worn number 30, the number I wore when I played for the Celtics. That in itself is very ironic. This is the saddest time of the Celtics franchise since Walter Brown died.

I'm not surprised that the Celtics

beat the Houston Rockets in the finals to win their 16th NBA championship. As I've been saying all year, they had to develop that playoff mentality, and they did. The Celtics were on a mission--to win the championship. Nothing was going to stop them until they did it. Without a championship, the season wouldn't have been a success.

It's also not surprising that Larry Bird was a key factor for the Celtics against the Rockets, especially in that sixth game. Bird plays so intensely all the time, and he is one of the few players who always comes through in big games--when you really need him to. Bird wants the ball in key situations and wants to take the important shots--he doesn't run away from the ball.

After the Rockets beat the Celtics in the fifth game at Houston, some of the Rockets players said they figured they could win in Boston Garden. That backfired on them, because it inspired the Celtics to go back home, win the series and take the championship.

The fans at the Garden definitely were a factor in game six. I don't know if they threw Ralph Sampson off his game, but I know they did

spur the Celtics. I don't think I've ever seen a Boston Garden crowd that excited for a game. They were yelling and screaming and cheering from the opening tipoff to the end of the game. And the players appreciated the support given to them by the fans as well.

The Celtics are savoring this championship, for sure, but when training camp starts in the fall, they'll be back on the same mission again. If there's a team that can break the string of no team repeating as NBA champions it's this one.

I'd watch out for the Rockets, too. Akeem Olajuwon can only get better as a center, and he's already great. And Sampson is still a great player. Despite the bad blood and harsh words exchanged between the teams, I know that every Celtic has a lot of respect for the Rockets. Of course, the Rockets respect the Celtics, too.

* * * * *

There were several things in the draft that surprised me. I never expected the Philadelphia 76ers to trade Moses Malone, especially to a team in the same division. You can bet Moses will be looking for revenge every time the Bullets play Philly.

I was also surprised that the Sixers would give up the number-one pick in the entire draft, especially since Brad Daugherty was so highly regarded. I think the Cleveland Cavaliers will be tough, now that they have Daugherty and Ron Harper. Plus Wayne Embry is their new general manager, which will be a big help to them. Embry is a sharp guy and very respected in basketball circles.

THE CELTICS HAVE A NEW NUMBER

NICE MOVE CELTICS!

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Congratulations Celtics!



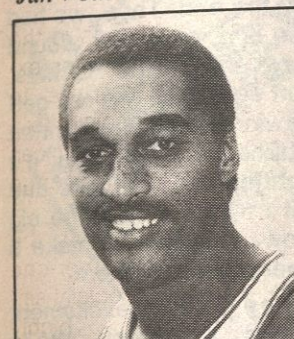
What Does It All Mean?

The 270th consecutive sellout at the Boston Garden witnessed it: Larry Bird's incredibly determined play, the usual superb offense/defense of running mate Dennis Johnson, Robert Parish's courageous running game as the Chief charged his way to his 3rd championship ring in his six Celtic seasons. Boston's 114-97 win over the Houston Rockets June 8th wrapped up the NBA Finals, and Boston's ("Sweet") 16th franchise championship.

The Celtics players were asked what the final championship feeling actually was to each of them. How much of the victory was sports related?



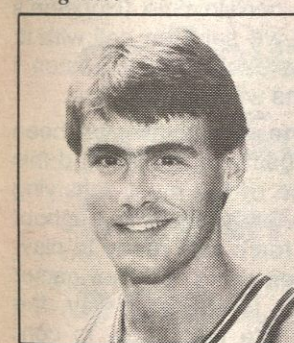
Jan Volk



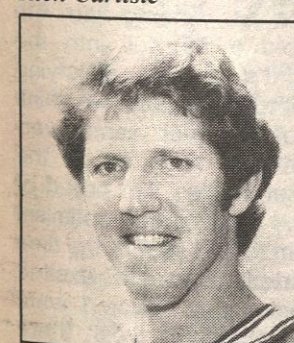
Dennis Johnson



Greg Kite



Rick Carlisle



Bill Walton

General Manager Jan Volk: Being in the championship series symbolizes the culmination of a year's work, sometimes years of work. Winning is the satisfaction of accomplishing the goal...or falling short. That's why there's so much pressure.

Dennis Johnson: It is the end of the season, and believe it or not, I am completely drained. But, winning the title is the most special, unbelievable feeling in the world. There is nothing, nothing like it.

Greg Kite: It's what your whole career in basketball is all about. Personal accomplishments are secondary to winning. Everybody in the whole organization has expected to win in the three years I've been here and this team never expects to lose. We have the potential and talent, I believe, to equal any team that's ever played. The difference this year (compared to last) is we have the right complement of individual players who work together. We had luck, we had no serious injuries. We avoided bad negative grooves. Money at this stage is secondary.

Rick Carlisle: Being on this team is the pinnacle. Winning the championship is a once in a lifetime thing. It's a big thrill.

Winning the championship--success--means having met all the challenges. A fitting end.

Bill Walton: I'd forgotten how great it is, how great it feels. I'd forgotten how much work it takes. But there is nothing like the championship feeling. To come here, to play with the Celtics, to have them have faith in you, and then to go out and play in 80 games and the playoffs--and then to win--all wonderful dream stuff. Unbelievable, and the joy transcends the money involved.

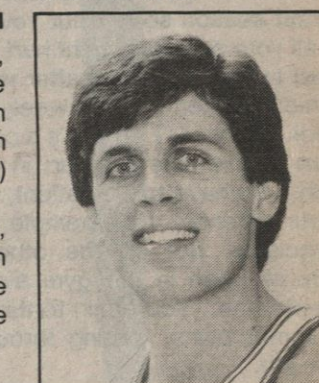
Larry Bird: The last game (Game 6) meant a great deal to me. I have never been so pumped up for a game, and our team went out and played so well. We feel as good about ourselves as a team as any I've ever been on. I think we're among the best teams who have ever played. This is what makes this championship special. To have the potential that this team has, and then to go out and win it, makes this the most memorable of championships. Money? This is the dream job as it is.



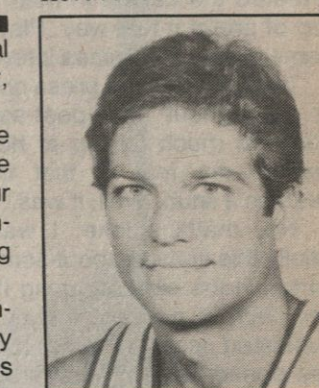
Larry Bird



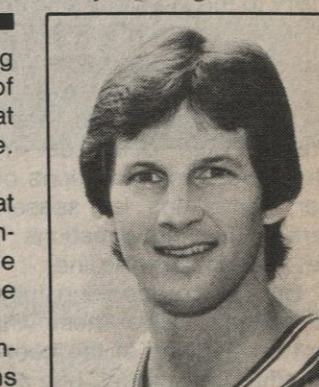
Robert Parish



Kevin McHale



Jerry Sichting



Scott Wedman

Robert Parish: This was the third championship for me--I don't think too many other players can say that. It's a great accomplishment for our team, very rewarding. I think the depth of our team meant a lot in winning. More people contributed, and more people felt involved. For me, the financial rewards aren't much of a consideration at all.

Kevin McHale: I think of three major points. First, an immediate one, and that was the fight in Game 5. They punched at us physically, but more than that, they swung away at our self-esteem. When they did that, all I kept thinking was (Game 6) "Sunday. Sunday. Sunday."

Because the championship means pride, especially in the Celtics' organization. When another team attempts to trample that, they're defacing history--the Cousys, the Loscutoffs. We protect that.

Jerry Sichting: You're right there--it's a special feeling. We've put in a lot of hard work this year, but most of us have been doing that for 20 years.

What you think about is that this is what you've been playing for since you were eight or nine years old. When you shoveled the snow off your court and then went out to play at dusk, your hands icy, numb. I think about all the work lifting weights, and running.

I don't equate the championship with its financial rewards. I already have made more money than I ever thought I could possibly make in this game. It's probably tax money for some of these guys. But the title share for me is meaningful.

Scott Wedman: It's the feeling of accomplishing what you've set out to do from the first day of training camp. It's a very satisfying feeling: that you should be here. That you're glad you're here. That you want to be here.

You win a championship by having great players, a great coach, and one player who consistently is in the game and is able to overcome adversity, able to rise above and meet the challenge. Then others will step forth.

You accomplish that special goal (and competition means) other don't quite make it. It means we're One--through sacrifice and talent.



Larry Bird's Championship Journal

Larry Bird's awards and talents do their own talking, much like Bird himself. This is the only forward in the history of the professional game to win the Most Valuable Player award for three consecutive seasons. He is the only player to win the regular season and playoff MVPs in the same season twice (1984 and 1986).

More than that, Larry Bird is the greatest non-stats player in the game (with Magic Johnson), perhaps ever. He shoots, passes, and defends with the team's purpose always in the forefront. And these team-oriented qualities don't detract from his personal goals: this season, he averaged 25.8 ppg, 9.8 rebounds, .896 free throws, .423 3-point FG, 2.02 steals.

"I lead by example," says the Captain of the Celtics. Little wonder, then, that this Celtics team is already legendary in its own moment in history. **Here's Larry's Journal.**

Sunday, May 25th. I'm ready to play the games at this point; we have been off a week since we defeated Milwaukee (4 straight). It's been a great season so far, but you wonder if all your success might hurt you. We had to wait five days after we swept Chicago, then another week after we took Atlanta 4-1. There's a contradiction at this time of year; in order to win, you have to be patient, execute your offense, for example, calmly, precisely. But on the other hand, you've been in the gym since mid-September. You begin to think about summer plans, getting through with the job.

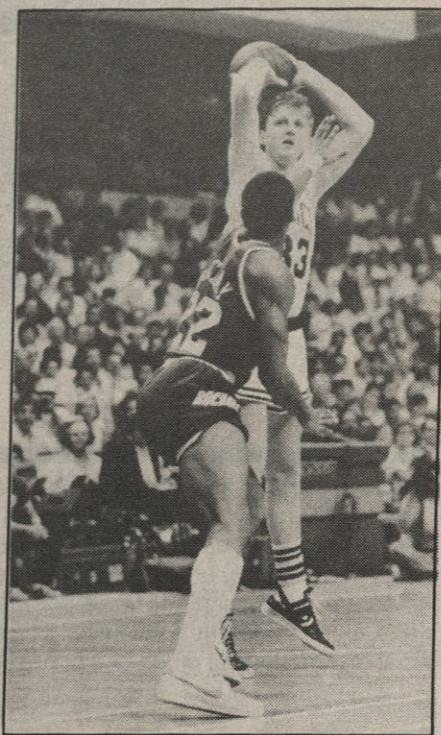
We play Houston this year---they defeated the Lakers in their series. I sort of prefer it that way. Playing new teams makes the games interesting.

I've talked to the press consistently throughout the post-season. I didn't do much talking at home this season---my fear is that this was taken as a snub. Well, it was...

No, that's a joke. I was upset initially this season about some things written in the papers during the summer. But, it passes; mostly I communicated less at home because I was conserving my energy as much as possible. You do have responsibility to the media as a professional, but it is only part of the job. The continual questions can be very draining.

For example, there are several groups of questioners, people with different time deadlines. You get asked the same questions over and over. Sometimes, last season, I'd be there answering questions 'til very late. I had to draw the line.

But I'm co-operating fully during the playoffs. Give them what they want. I was wary of the questions at one time in my career, but, as long as the story's truthful, I don't usually mind. I was worried that some stories



Larry Leads by Example.

would be offensive to my teammates, but the more experienced you are, the more you realize you can talk these things through with the guys (on the team).

But it's far more easy playing. The questions today were a lot about my first Celtics Coach **Bill Fitch** and **K.C. (Jones)**. I have tremendous respect for both men. They come to win, and not to lose. Bill Fitch was an extremely hard worker, and he helped shape my game. I love K.C.--I think that's shared throughout our team. I'll play very hard against Bill, though, in this series.

Monday, May 26. We feel very confident at home, and today we played very well in defeating the Rockets, 112-100, to go up 1-0 in the series. We were able to draw fouls on Ralph Sampson (early) and Akeem Olajuwon (late) and this made our jobs considerable easier.

The challenge at this time of year is what drives your game. Also, since the middle of the season, I think our team found its offensive rhythm, maybe better than any team I've ever been on. In 24 seconds, you have to find certain areas on offense quickly, especially on our team, which depends on the passing game and ball movement. We've been doing this consistently all year. Today, our defense to offense transition was excellent, too.

Tuesday, May 27. I think one of the reasons for our success this year has been K.C.'s ability to sense when our team needs rest, even in practices. I don't imply that he's been easy; the practice we had after we lost Game 4 of the Atlanta series was one of the longest of the year. But, we are a veteran team, we can't really expend our strength in long, involved scrim-

riages. I think there's a special art in keeping teams ready to play at this time of year.

Playoffs require that you not only be at the top of your game as a team, but that you are able to enforce your style of play on the other team. That's the competition involved. That's the answer, really, to winning in a team sport.

I't easier said than done. To do this, you have to have a strong team confidence. I believe our starting team is easily the best in the league. Our bench, with the addition of Bill Walton and Jerry Sichting, has made us stronger. We believe we can get the job done, play our game.

I personally feel very strong right now. My body feels great (not that the games aren't very exhausting, because they are). I just feel that I can go out and play four very good quarters every game. A good thought, especially when you're playing for the world championship.

Wednesday, May 28. I'm very thankful; I was named the Most Valuable Player in the NBA, for the 3rd straight year, joining Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain as the only players to win the award. It meant something to have Russell present the award---he's a Celtic, and I admire him. I didn't see much of him as a player, but I always admired Dave Cowen's game. Winning the MVP is a great honor and a strong motivating factor. Once you play on a high level personally, you want to see if you can stay at that plateau. And improve on it.

Thursday, May 29. We won Game 2 against the Rockets---after last year, we were determined not to lose the 2nd game here. Now even if we struggle in three games down in Houston, the pressure is still on them.

I played well tonight, shot pretty well, made 3 3-pointers, and tried to play a strong inside game defensively. The thing about the 3-pointers is that they are something I believe I can make. Anytime; and that's half the battle. So, if they surprise teams, well, maybe that's part of the creativity of it for me. I enjoy the surprise--maybe it makes the shot easier.

The press after the game was extremely tight quarters. Sometimes I think it's too blown up, out of proportion. We are not in any holy war, we're playing basketball. We're not out to hurt anybody---Ralph Sampson, Akeem, Bill. We're just trying to win the championship.

Monday, June 2. Houston won yesterday---a game we had but let slip away. Like some putts I missed this afternoon during the game of golf played with some friends. I don't like to talk too much during the playoffs. I keep to myself, except among my

close friends, and even them, I keep to myself. But, I like to joke around, too. Among my teammates (who are my friends). A few of my hometown people are down here for the games. I can't sit in the hotel for 24 hours.

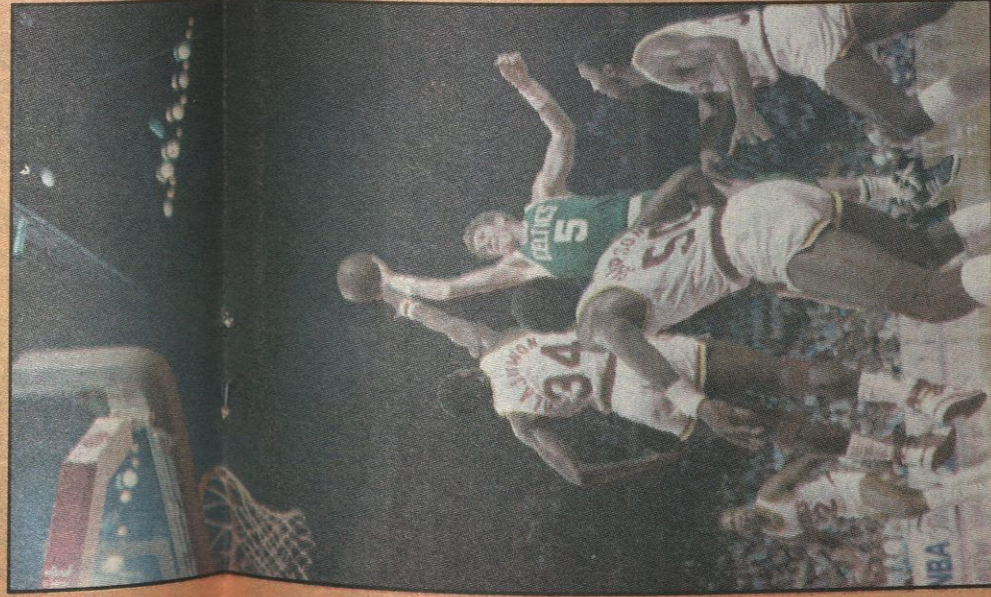
Wednesday, June 4. Much talk was spread around about the excellent defense Robert Reid played against me in the 3rd game. I think I can score against him, even though I believe the referees may give him some freedom to swarm me (respect for a veteran such as Robert). But we won the necessary 3rd game down here, a great game, which we pulled out in the end. Bill Walton played very well at the end; Robert Parish was a warrior underneath all night, and Bill finished the job. I hit a 3-point goal to break a tie at the end. Then, we had the ball at the end, passing it around as the time ran out on the Rockets. As Bill Walton said after, we are getting close to winning. Much is written about my abilities in the clutch; it's pretty straightforward. I'll take the shot. Even if I miss, I'll take the big shot tomorrow. I believe I'll make a damn good percentage of them.

Saturday, June 7. The excitement has died down, in a way. We're distracted by the fight between Ralph and Jerry, but I believe in a positive way. After the fight, and the defeat, we went out to dinner at a very good seafood restaurant (Angelo's) in Houston. But I didn't feel much like eating. We became very passive after the brawl--if you let down for a moment in the championships, it's costly, deadly. But, I think as a team we're very upset. Angry. We did not play well for much of that 5th game in Houston, and I think we were showing that in practice today. Once it reached a certain time (Houston's dead), I think we said the hell with it. We'll get them back home in Boston. I sense our fans will be ready, too.

Monday, June 9. I have never been higher for a game in my life and this has to be one of the most satisfying wins in my whole career. Throughout the day, our team was ready to play. From the beginning of the game: There was no let-up; in a way, the fight helped. We were able to concentrate on this particular ballgame. The pressure of winning the 6th game to avoid a 7th fell into the background. It's a very satisfying feeling--hard to describe. We think we are one of the best teams ever, and we fearlessly took on all the challenges that implies. I'm proud of the guys, and have great optimism about the team for the rest of the time on my contract. And I'm excited about my game, too. Since I went more to my lefthand this year, there are interesting moves to practice this summer. This will be a nice summer.

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Celtics Confidential

by Bob Schron

In the end, the Celtics won the championship experts and fans had anticipated. Challenged every night through the regular season (particularly after the entire league witnessed the 113-104 double OT loss on Christmas afternoon to the Knicks, a.k.a. "The Christmas Massacre") and confronted throughout the playoffs from the moment Michael Jordan shattered scoring records, the Celtics prevailed.

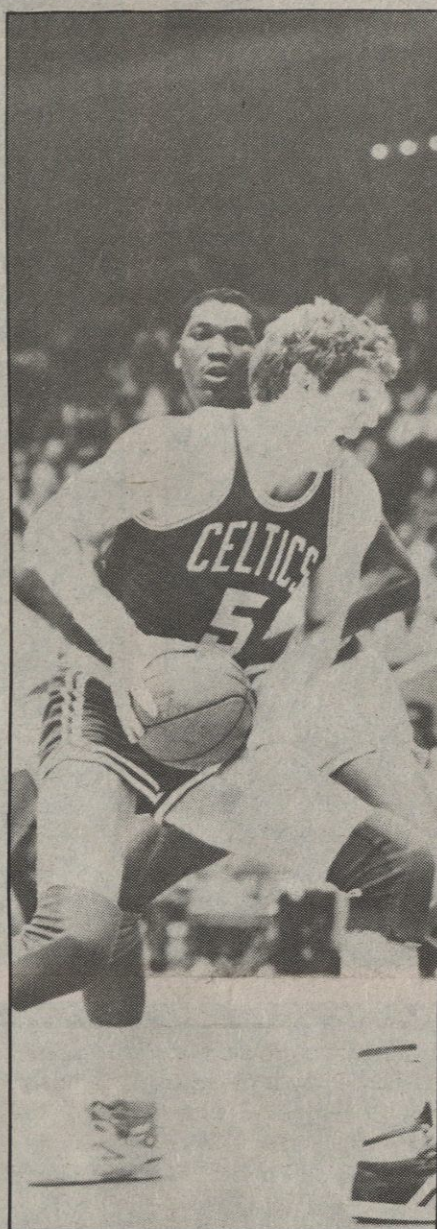
The causes were many---K.C. Jones' superb game-coaching, and ability to manage a coaching staff; a starting five featuring four all-stars; the Bill Walton - led bench, and Larry Bird. Bird has now won three team championships and the evidence supporting the claim he is the best all-around player ever is becoming overpowering.

In the end, it took a challenge for the Celtics to deliver the climax. In Game 6 of the New York playoff series in 1984, Rory Sparrow went after Bird as the latter was driving for a breakaway layup. Sparrow took the foul---with malice, shoving an elbow and forearm to Bird's head. Bird, of course, was defenseless. The Knicks won that game, but did not score after that flagrant foul and Bird responded in the showdown with 39 points, 15 rebounds, 10 assists and 3 steals: C's 121-New York 104.

After Ralph Sampson went down swinging in Game 5 of the NBA Finals, Bird wore a mask of anger for three days. During the warmups before Game 6 at the Garden, he glared down the court at the red-clad visitors and this was no put-on. His numbers for the final: 29 points, 13 assists, 11 rebounds. Are the '85-86 C's the best ever? They match up favorably with such as the 1972 Lakers, '67 Philadelphia 76ers, the dynasty Celtics. And the '85-86 team has Larry Bird.

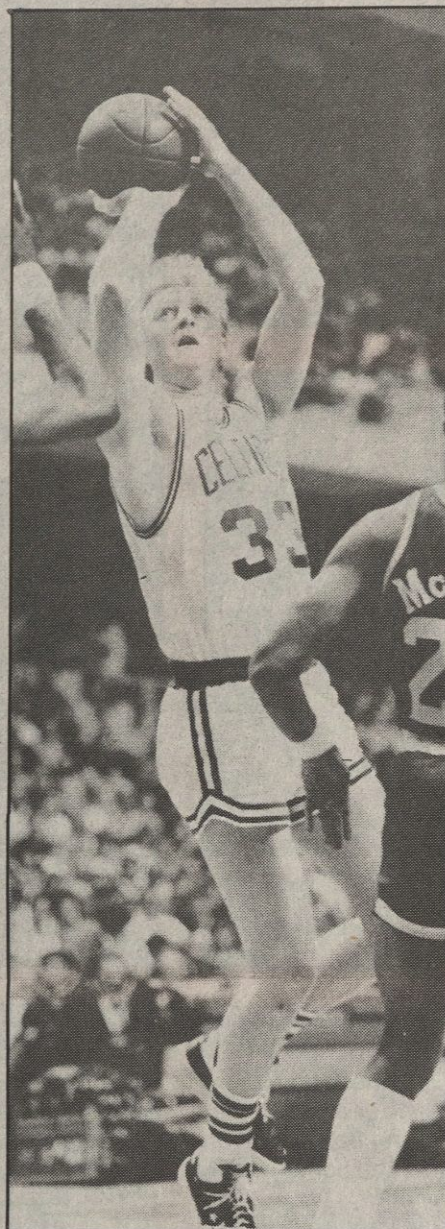
Bird maintained an extremely high level of play yet appeared very tired after many games...Bill Russell presented the NBA Most Valuable Player Award to Bird in a ceremony televised by WTBS, May 28...Dave Cowens was guest analyst on CBS TV's coverage of Game 5 from Houston...Despite some initial pessimism by CBS, ratings were up throughout the NBA Finals.

With the signing of Greg Kite and Scott Wedman late in the playoffs, rumor is Rick Carlisle is negotiating with the team. The second-year guard concluded his final year on his contract...The Celtics had Len Bias and William Bedford in town to discuss potential plans for the upcoming draft. The Celtics draft 2nd.



Walton led the Bench.

Bedford---who appears to be a clear 7-0---was joined in Red Auerbach's office by Bill Russell (in town for the Bird presentation)...Director of Player Personnel and Assistant Coach Jimmy Rodgers continued to be the subject of rumors about head coaching jobs in the league...Auerbach was featured in Esquire Magazine's special issue, "The American Man: 1946-86"...Boston Globe columnist Leigh Montville wrote "And They All Say, 'This Is It?'" a feature about Boston Garden in the May 19 issue of Sports Illustrated...Unfortunately the crowd in Houston was chastised by Bird and others during Game 5 of the Finals. The Rockets provided a much needed rallying point for that city, smitten by the depressed oil economy and other civic layoffs. The Garden crowd in the clincher was inspiring, exemplary; they again proved they are the finest audience in professional sports...The Garden's historic parquet was subject to extensive scrutiny by several of the 400 media types while they awaited Houston's arrival for their Saturday,



Bird: Series MVP.

pre-Game 6 practice, June 7. Fabled dead spots and cracks between individual boards were items of interest...Don Nelson, coach of the Milwaukee Bucks made repeated pleas for publicity of the farmers' plight in Wisconsin during the Eastern Conference Finals.

Ed Badger scouted Atlanta, Milwaukee and Houston during the Playoffs...Celtics felt that they could pressure the Houston guards and draw benefits from experience edge in the inside game versus Houston...Bird immediately refuted Houston's claim of they (the Rockets) have nothing to lose. "Both teams have everything to gain and to lose---the world championship," claimed Bird, who takes a backseat to no one when it comes to the psychology side of the game. Bill Fitch, when told of Larry's statement, agreed completely.

Summer Plans. K.C. Jones will take the Celtics cruise in a few weeks after completing his work on the draft. Jones will make the trip with his

wife Ellen...Larry Bird and Jerry Sichting will travel back to Indiana. Bird will conduct a few camps in the midwest, and plan to rest before slowly resuming practice in a month...Rick Carlisle was debating whether to play summer basketball in Los Angeles when the season ended. His mother was in for the final series against Houston. Rick will likely return home before finalizing any plans...David Thirdkill will return to St. Louis briefly before going on to Phoenix for the remainder of the off-season...

Bill Walton will head back home to San Diego for the off-season. Walton will take part in a summer promotion with WBOS-FM, inviting a contest winner to visit him in California. Walton's folks, Ted and Glo Walton were fans in Milwaukee during the Eastern Conference Championship, and in Houston during the NBA Finals...

Kevin McHale also will be heading back to Minnesota, his home state for the summer. He will fish, visit with friends, and golf. He will make the Celtics cruise with his wife Lynne...Danny Ainge and his family will complete summer arrangements in their new home in Weston...Greg, Jenny and the Kite family will visit both spouse's families in Florida and Houston. Kite was the subject of comprehensive publicity in the Houston papers when the team was playing the three road games in Houston in the Finals.

Dennis and Donna Johnson will return to Los Angeles for the greater part of the summer...Nancy Parish will continue to study music this off-season, while Robert Parish will pursue investment interests in Boston.

IN THE SUMMERTIME. Vincent has gone back to East Lansing to further work on his game. "When the camp comes around, I'll be ready," he promised. K.C. Jones remained happy with Vincent's progress and attitude through the end of the season. Jones vehemently denied any rumor of Vincent being on the block...The Celtics' office staff now has (generally) four day work weeks through the end of the summer, and vacation weeks, too...Ford takes his family back to the Jersey shore for the summer, returning to rookie camp August 2nd...That is a change; formerly the camp was held in Marshfield during the final week of August. It's earlier, and at Brandeis...Auerbach will spend most of his summer in Washington D.C. ... Badger will summer in Cincinnati, with several side scouting trips in the works...Tom Sanders and Don Nelson (along with Robert Parish) will hold their annual summer camp at New Hampshire College in July.

"The Fight"- Rockets Win Battle; C's Win Title

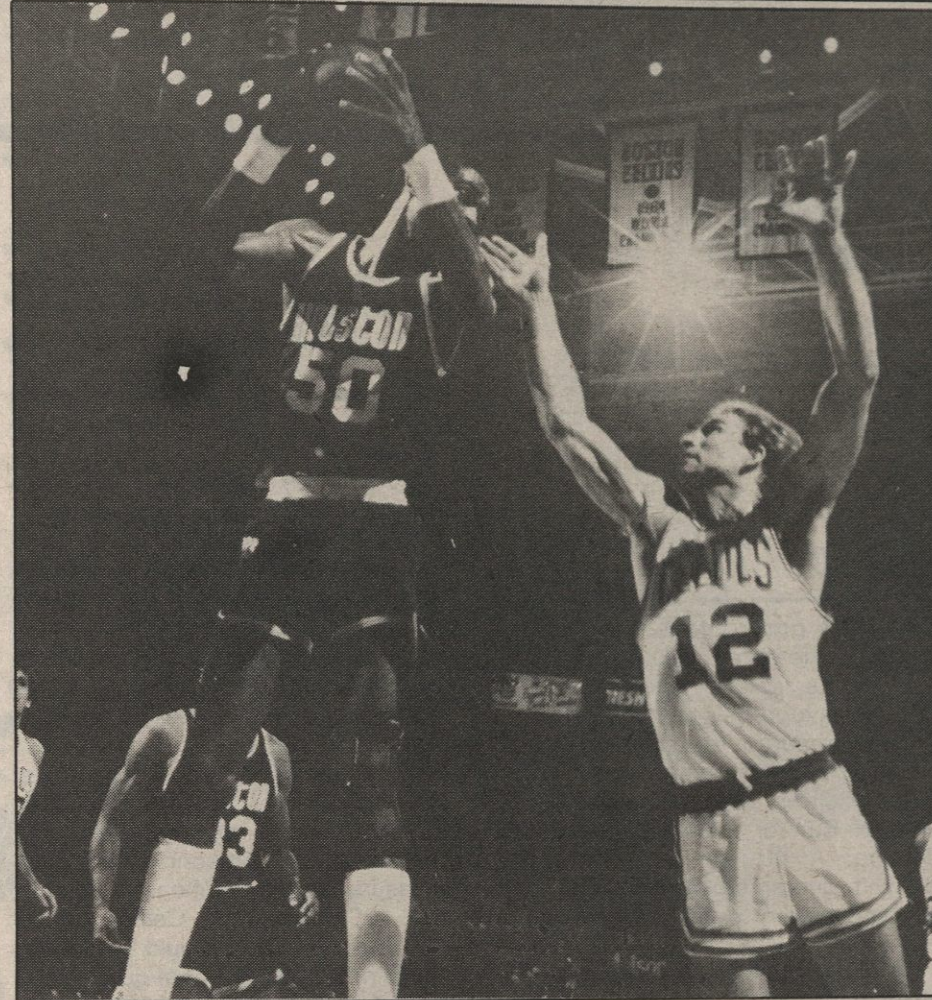
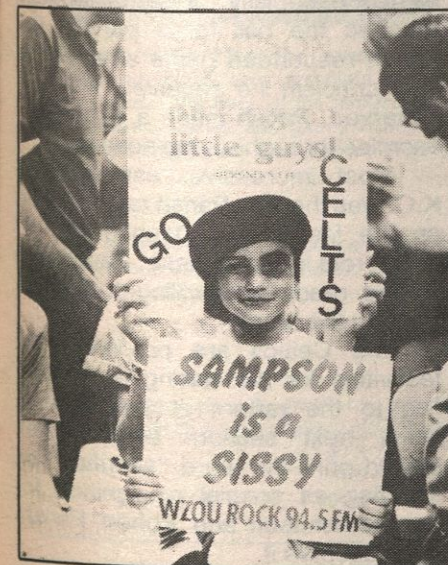
By Bob Schron

To understand the punching incident between the Houston Rockets' Ralph Sampson and the Boston Celtics' Jerry Sichting, it is necessary to go back to the first game of the championship series, when within the first five minutes of the game, Sampson, at the Boston Garden, was benched after picking up his 3rd personal foul. The 7-4 Rocket Forward never got into the flow of that game, shooting 1-13 from the field. And the Rockets were dismal losers in the Boston Garden that afternoon, and throughout the remainder of the series.

Sampson's tribulations continued in the 2nd game, also in Boston. He went out again in the first half, this time because of a cut eye which required five stitches. Again, the Rockets were blown out.

When Sampson squared off with the smaller Celtic player, it was on the tail end of an emotional home stand for the Houston team. Sampson staged a personal comeback in Game 3, scoring 24 with 22 rebounds as the Rockets won for the first time in the series. He scored 21 first half points in Game 4, but cooled considerably in the 2nd half as the Celtics won to gain an insurmountable 3-1 series lead. That Sampson felt increasing pressure throughout the series, from his standstill start in the opening minutes of the finals, would he understating the case, it appears.

Sampson is an almost imponderable talent---7-4, with the ability of a guard, the running speed of a 6-6 player, the jumping ability with the best of the game. Often, he talks about "needing to do things to lead my team." Sampson, according to *Inside Sport's* Charley Rosen, would love to play guard. He is an emotional player, one who tries to create action for his team, one who feels pressure constantly from the media when he does not fulfill the power production



Sampson was very frustrated.

of goliath.

"There has been pressure on me as the villain from the moment I began playing basketball," he said two days after the fight.

* * * * *

The details of the fight are likely graphically imprinted on basketball fans' collective minds. At 9:40 of the 2nd period of Game 5, Sampson and Sichting collided near the top of the circle in the backcourt. According to Roy S. Johnson of *The New York Times*, Sichting said to Sampson, "I'm going to get you for that." From the end zone behind the basket where the incident took place, it appeared to this observer that Sichting became trapped underneath, couldn't (wouldn't?) shake free, and then Sampson began swinging. A seventeen minutes brawl followed: included where A Bill Walton flying tackle of Sampson, active defending and punching by Dennis Johnson and Akeem Olajuwon, milling around by players like Mitchell Wiggins, Robert Reid, Larry Bird, and Danny Ainge. Johnson was cut by a grazing swing by Olajuwon. Sampson broke free from Walton and charged the stunned Sichting, who had staggered into the stands. When the brawl had ended, Sampson, stunned, fell back against the press table near the Rockets' bench. Jack Madden ejected the young Rockets' captain.

Sichting growled later, "I've been hit harder by a mosquito." Sampson issued a formal statement to the media, that he had acted in self-defense. And the ironic moment finally occurred within the game itself, the incident took place immediately after an Olajuwon reverse dunk, which sent the Rockets ahead 34-33. If the moral stance would have been designated at that time, it should have gone to the visiting Celtics. If they needed an emotional lift to steel them against the Rockets, who needed the game to stave off elimination, this should have been it. But Robert Reid, who would set an NBA record of 13 1st half assists, instead used this to Houston's advantage.

"I walked over to Jim Peterson and told him 'There goes the man, our captain. He won't play anymore. You have to play the game of your life.'" Reid recalled later.

The Rockets went on an immediate 13-4 run, and closed out the third quarter with another 13-4 run, finishing the game there, with an 86-65 lead.

After the game, the reactions varied; Bird commented that after the fight, "We stopped moving the ball. I was touching the ball early but after the fight, we fell flat. But we'll be ready for the next game."

"In the back of everybody's mind,

we knew we had to play harder," stated Olajuwon (32 points, 14 rebounds). We knew we had to play more aggressive without Ralph."

"I don't know what happened. I guess we let up a little because Ralph was out. We should have taken control of the game. Instead, they kicked our tails," said Kevin McHale.

Bird added, "We lost our composure and the Rockets hit everything they threw up. It was one of those games where once they got ahead, we just said, 'To hell with it.'"

Dennis Johnson said, and reserve Greg Kite (a Houstonian) concurred, "It wasn't the turning point of the game. We weren't playing well before the fight. We weren't moving the ball and we weren't boxing out."

"The crowd didn't score any baskets. They had 25 offensive rebounds...but I guess (the crowd) can't hurt."

"The referees definitely protected the Rockets in the second half. The refs felt they had to make up (for ejecting Sampson). Houston got every call," stated Bird.

"The fans were loud and they were nasty. The Rockets better be ready for Game 6 in Boston Garden, because our fans can get pretty nasty, too."

About Sampson's punch at Sichting, Bird concluded, "I wouldn't swing at 6-1 guys. Never."

Bill Fitch said, "We played like there was no tomorrow. I've coached a few years and I think this was one of the most emotional non-seventh games."

* * * * *

The incident tipped the scales to the Rockets temporarily, evoking anger from the home crowd. Yet, if the Celtics let down---if a talented team lets down, it often lets down completely---they were saving intensity for Game 6.

Every team's character is different. Throughout a tumultuous year, which saw Fitch and Sampson at odds, the Rockets stood behind their young Captain. When he left the game, the Houston ballclub rallied. Often teams will play better when their best player is out, to compensate for the loss, and to prove the collective talent of the rest of the team. There are no real bad players in the National Basketball Association.

Finally, the Rockets were, in retrospect, demonstrating their talent and team skill (running game, Olajuwon, etc.) for a final time on their home floor, where they were 43-6 throughout the season.

Returning to Boston Garden, with an intimidated (sadly, almost) Sampson, the Rockets were disoriented throughout Game 6. They fell fairly docilely, 114-97, and lost the series.



Eddie Gillooly

"Don't Get No Respect"

Defense wins championships but it certainly doesn't win individual honors as K.C. Jones, Satch Sanders and Don Chaney learned long ago. Collectively, that Celtics trio has 18 championship rings but not once did they get to play in an NBA All-Star game or win the Most Valuable Player Award in the playoffs.

Now, the Celtics have another defensive gem who is fast becoming unrecognized when it comes time to pass out the awards. Dennis Johnson, who was sensational throughout the season and spectacular in the playoffs, was snubbed by the fans and coaches in the voting for the NBA All-Star game squad and was overlooked by the writers and broadcasters in the voting for the MVP of the NBA's second season.

Certainly no one can dispute the MVP choice---Larry Bird. But the thing that bothered me is that it appeared there was only minimal support for Johnson among the vast number of writers and broadcasters covering the final series. The sacrifices he made on offense as well as his near flawless defensive game were not fully appreciated.

If the Houston series ended in four games---and it easily could have if the Celtics hadn't faded in the final minutes of the third game---Johnson had a real shot at the MVP. But Johnson committed himself to taking Robert Reid out of the sixth game and not too many recognized the full value of that effort.

Ever since his rookie season with the Seattle Supersonics, DJ has lived with the label, "defensive guard" even though his game is clearly not one-dimensional. Dennis is not a pure shooter but he is a scorer---a clutch scorer. His goal to be recognized as a "complete" guard is not coming easy. His sparkling defense seems to diminish his strong offensive talents.

While the majority of fans---as well as a number of media types---

appreciate good defense, they really delight in the slam dunks, the Air Jordan flights to the hoop and the twisting layups being unveiled by all the newcomers in the league.

That's entertainment. It's dazzling, exciting and most often spectacular. But for the long range, it's fleeting. A 40-point scoring effort doesn't guarantee victory if it isn't accompanied by defense at the other end.

That's Johnson's forte. He'll make a superb steal at one end of the court and complete the play at the other end with a rifle pass to Larry Bird or a quick jumper. Or when the opening is available, he'll drive to the basket for a layup. He is not readable. He has many weapons on offense.

While Michael Jordan, Magic

Johnson and Isiah Thomas are flashier, Dennis Johnson is steadier. He rarely makes costly mistakes, particularly in crunch time. He never loses control of a situation and can produce a clutch play when it's needed.

What makes Johnson unique is his concentration and willingness to play within the team concept. He'll pass up an easy jumper to make the feed to the power players under the basket. It's always tempting for a guard to take the jumper but Johnson and his backcourt mate Danny Ainge are more than willing to sacrifice their stats for victories.

There's no denying Bird earned the MVP but Johnson certainly deserved more voting support than he received. If someone took time to measure his contributions in each of the 100 games the Celtics played this past season, it would be difficult not to rate DJ as the best guard in the NBA during the 1985-86 season.

His stats won't substantiate that acclaim because of the Celtics team concept but his game-in and game-out contributions in the 82 victories would provide overwhelming evidence. He sets picks, rebounds and orchestrates the Celtics half court



D.J. is definitely a complete guard.

game. Maybe next year, fans will give him his due as the one of the BEST guards in the NBA instead of THE BEST defensive guards in the league.

Robert Parish also deserved more respect than he received in the playoffs, particularly in the championship series against the Rockets. If anyone has sacrificed his game for the good of the team, it's Parish and yet most do not recognize it. As a result, the Chief is taken to task for doing what he's supposed to do.

When Kevin McHale became a starter, Parish agreed to give up his permanent residency in the low post. K.C. Jones' theory was logical in that McHale would have more of an advantage in the low post against the smaller forwards than Parish would have against a seven foot center.

Parish assumed the role of clearing out the area by moving to the top of the key. That gave McHale the one-on-one situations. The Chief was also assigned to set the picks for Larry Bird. Jones' strategy is to attack a situation until the opposition makes an adjustment and as a result, there were times Parish wouldn't touch the ball for an entire period.

During these stretches when McHale dominated the play from the low post, the Chief would be chided because "he wasn't getting involved" in the offense. Correctly, he was very much involved by taking his man out to the high post and providing McHale with the room inside.

When the opposition made an adjustment by double teaming or McHale needed a rest, Jones would change assignments and put Parish back into his familiar spot. The only difference is that Parish doesn't have the height advantage that the Celtics enjoy with McHale.

Positioning yourself at the high post is not an easy task. Parish must wait for the precise moment when McHale makes his move to the basket so that his man won't release early and hinder McHale's shot or his reverse move to the hoop. It's at that point he has to be concerned with the rebound in heavy traffic.

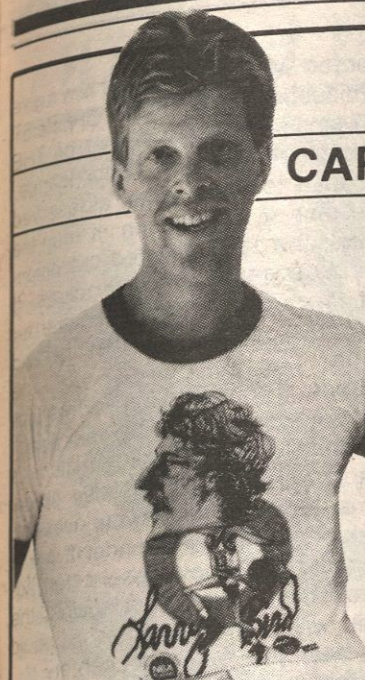
Making the transition from a decoy in the high post to the active role in the low post does not come easy, especially if you haven't touched the ball for a period. But Parish responded game after game. The criticism he received was undeserved. Parish made a substantial sacrifice throughout the season.

Most impressive, especially to K.C. was the way Parish ran the court on the fast break. Despite his different role in the offense, Parish was always ready and willing to be out front on the break.

The Celtics are preparing the festivities for the raising of another flag to the rafters at the opening game next season. Maybe they should print the word "sacrifice" on this flag as special recognition for Dennis Johnson and Robert Parish. They deserve it.

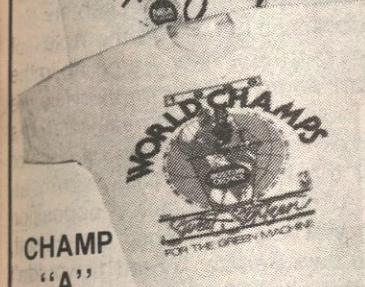
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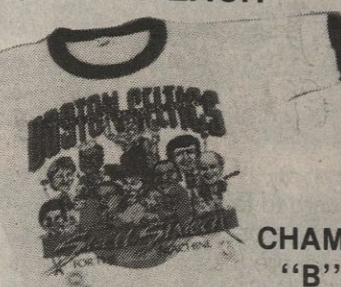
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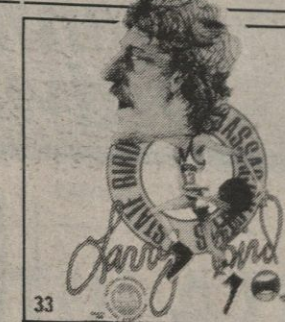


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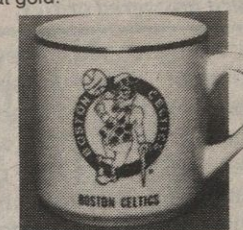
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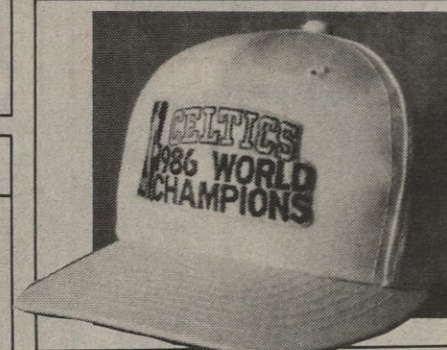


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Glenn Ordway

A Magical Mystery Tour

Before you crank up the VCR to relive those special moments of the 85-86 season let me attempt to re-cap some highlights that may not show up on your tape. It truly was a magical mystery tour for the Celtics. We all knew as the season began way back in October that this team had the potential to be something special. That they were. But there was questions in those first few months. Remember that summer long theory pronounced by many sports talk show hosts that with

Maxwell gone the Celtics would never be able to defend the Cummings, Ervings, Barkleys, Worthys etc. The Celtics responded with Kevin McHale being honored on the NBA's All Defensive team. There were those fears that Bill Walton would continue his bad habit of failing to show for most team practices. He was there working this tail off every single day. There was the team captain straining with pain to run up and down the court. He refused to admit that he had a serious problem. But anyone who has been around Larry

expected when they pryed him away from baseball. There was a Christmas Day Massacre. The players to a man look back at that game (blowing a 25 point lead to the Knicks) as the turning point at the season. It may be the day the team learned the art of burying opponents and keeping them eight feet under. Because that's the way they played the rest of the season.

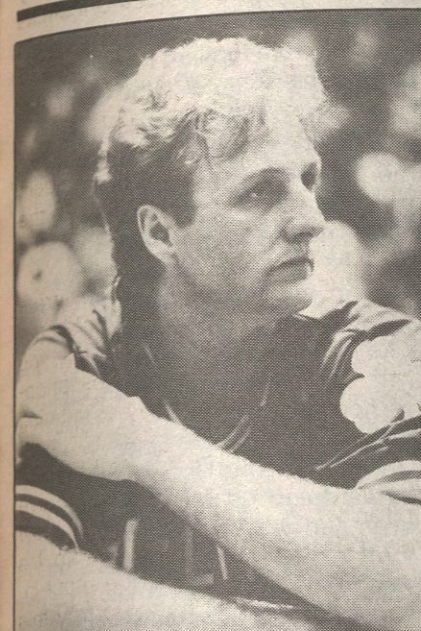
It was a year in that if you were a season ticket holder, you went home only once disappointed. And if you were doing a little Christmas shopping on December 6, your winning streak is still alive. I wonder if most fans realize just how special that is? Do you think years from now Steve Colter will re-live the story of how they beat the Celtics in '85 to his grandchildren? It will be the most interesting to see how we portray this season some twenty or thirty years from now. Will we remember Scott Wedman leaving the team on a west coast trip to receive back treatment from a friend/chiropractor in Kansas City? Will we remember the Danny Ainge and Sedale Threatt fight? Will we remember Charles Barkleys firing-up speech "The Cavaliers have more talent top to bottom than the Celtics" or his follow-up "the Celtics know they can't beat us"? Will we remember Jake O'Donnell's inadvertant whistle? Will we remember Boston's devastating first quarter embarrassment of Cedric Maxwell and the Clippers in LA? Will we remember Dennis Johnson's 70 foot pass that just happened to find its way into the basket instead of someone's hands? Will we remember that Dallas picked up it's first win ever against Boston only because the Celtics gave it away in the closing seconds? Will we remember the hatred that existed between the Celtics and Bill Laimbeer and the Pistons? Will we remember that Greg Kite threw the ball at Lee Jones face? Will we remember that Sly Williams played on this team? Will we remember Bill Walton's opening game remarks after the Celts blew a 16 point lead in New Jersey, "I'm a disgrace to the Boston Celtics and I'm a disgrace to the game of basketball"? Will we remember Larry Bird twice failing to hit two free throws in the final seconds that would have won both games? Will we remember Larry scoring one basket and picking up seven assists from a prone position? Will we remember Michael Jordan scoring 63 points against the Celtics? Will we remember Julius Erving beating the Celts with a desperate three pointer at the buzzer? They all seemed so important at the time. But this team was not going to be denied of their dream. That's the way I'll remember them. Who knows if their the best of all time. I've always had difficulty trying to compare one era with another because the game is so different. One thing is for sure...They're the best of this time.



Bird answered critics.

Bird long enough knew that he was not right. "Have we seen the best of Larry Bird?" had been uttered by many a Celtics observer. A question that will probably pop up continuously throughout his career. There was the confidence factor for Danny Ainge. Could he finally shed the tendency to wimp-it when negative publicity surfaced? With the exception of a short mid-season shooting slump, Ainge finally emerged as the true player the Celts

It Will Be A Working Vacation For Larry Bird



Larry Bird: Wants to be Better.

Probably the best player in NBA history, Larry Bird, was in the lockerroom with his teammates, savoring the Celtics' 16th NBA title.

And while the rest of the players and coaches undoubtedly couldn't wait to get away from the round ball world for a couple of months after the end of a break-neck, nine-month schedule, Bird talked about his time off from basketball.

It would last a grand total of a couple of weeks. No vacation to the Bahamas, no lounging around a beach somewhere for Bird. He said there were a "few things" he had to work on.

A few things to work on? This is the same 6-9 forward who played well enough during the regular season to win his third Most Valuable Player award and help lead the Celtics march through the NBA playoffs and to the championship.

"He has arrived at the level of basketball where he wants to be," Celtics Coach K.C. Jones said. "The man just fills so many categories. Once he crosses the line, he's into the game to the point that he's alert to whatever happens to the ball."

And usually, it's Bird who makes it happen.

"A lot of guys can learn from him," Houston Rockets coach Bill Fitch says. "It's like the only theory on how to train a dumb dog. You make him watch a smart dog."

Bird was no dumb mutt against the Rockets, whom the Celtics beat in six games to take the crown. He had 29 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists in a triple-double performance.

"He's the best, Houston forward Jim Peterson said. "I never saw anyone demoralize a team himself the way Larry did? That's why he's the MVP of the NBA. He goes out and takes on a team almost single-handedly. At times, he doesn't seem to need his teammates."

Added Rocket Robert Reid; "I

think he rose to the occasion. He knows his ability and what he can do."

And Bird can do plenty. "He was everywhere," Bill Walton said. "How many big rebounds did he get? There's nothing he does that surprises me. Everything he does impresses me."

Despite all Bird's individual skills,

he is fully aware that there are four other men on the court along with him. He is usually the first to acknowledge contributions of other players.

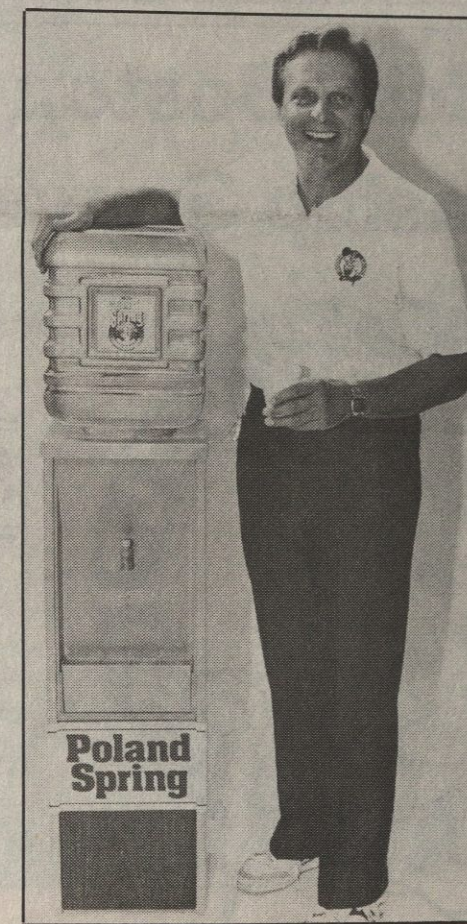
"Bill Walton was the key," Bird said after game six. "He gave us an added boost. And any time we get help from our center we're an awesome team."

It's an over-used word, but awesome has to be the best way to describe Bird. "I think everything that can be said about Larry has been said," Celtics guard Dennis Johnson said. "The best thing I've heard is what Red Auerbach said, which is that the difference between him and everyone else is that he comes to win every night. He is undoubtedly, in my mind at least, the best basketball player playing the game today."

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In a Word this Draft was...Strange!

Strange things were happening at the June 17 NBA draft.

One team, armed with the league's top overall choice, passed up the opportunity to select a franchise-building center and traded the number one choice away. That same team also shipped one of the best centers in the NBA to another team--in the same division.

Another ballclub used its top pick to take a center from the Soviet Union --a player who may never get out of the Iron Curtain, let alone play in the NBA. Then there were other picks, that at least on the surface, didn't make a whole lot of sense.

It was the Philadelphia 76ers, runners-up to the Celtics in the Atlantic Division this past season, who got the ball rolling...The Sixers were expected to take North Carolina's 6-11 center Brad Daugherty but swapped the pick to the Cleveland Cavaliers for power forward Roy Hinson and the proverbial future considerations. Strange trade.

Hinson is certainly a well-regarded player, but the Cavs have to be smiling about this move. Daugherty could give them the big man in the middle they've lacked for so long.

And can anyone make sense of what Philly is doing? About the only reason that comes to mind is owner Harold Katz wants to lop a few zeroes off his payroll. That's probably why he dealt Malone, making \$2 million a year, to the Washington Bullets, (along with Terry Catledge) an Atlantic Division rival of Philadelphia. In exchange for Malone, the Sixers got high-scoring forward Cliff Robinson and burly center Jeff Ruland.

"We'll be a much better team this season," Katz says. "I'm sorry we're losing Moses, but I'm very happy about the trade."

Bullet general manager Bob Ferry likes the deal himself.

"We lacked physical strength last year," Ferry says. "We were outmatched and outmuscled and outrebounced every game. We had to put a halt to that. Now we have two fierce players in Catledge and Malone. Now we have a chance to win."

After the Celtics selected Len Bias of Maryland, who tragically died of an apparent heart attack, the Golden State Warriors took a huge gamble and selected North Carolina State center Chris Washburn. Everyone is impressed with his body (6-11, 255 pounds) and his basketball skills, but he has been a notorious head case in the past. But new Warrior coach George Karl and the equally-new Warrior front office staff thought Washburn was worth the risk. They hope they're right--the future of the franchise probably depends on it.

Washburn attended three different high schools and left NC State after his sophomore season. He was suspended after seven games as a freshman after being convicted of stealing a stereo system from a dormitory room. He also has an assault and battery charge against him.

Despite the fact the Warriors took Washburn, they may not have really wanted him. Reports are Karl offered to switch places with the Indiana Pacers (who had the fourth pick) for center Steve Stipanovich. The Pacers would have taken Washburn, and the Warriors would likely then have taken Miami, Ohio swingman Ron Harper.

Now, the Warriors are stuck with Washburn.

"He's a comer," Karl says. "He's not even touched what he's going to be. He has no negatives on the court, but some negatives off the court."

"You're talking about a guy 7-foot tall who gets a lot of attention. It's very vogue to put things down like this. I don't think either one of those things is as serious as the attention they've gotten."

Former Warrior great Nate Thurmond, now the team's director of community relations, has been designated as Washburn's tutor.

Everyone thought the Indiana Pacers would use the fourth pick to take 7-foot center William Bedford from Memphis State. Wrong. The Pacers surprised the world by taking 6-8, 215 pound forward Chuck Person out of Auburn. Person comes out of Auburn with good credentials, 23.8 points, 9.5 rebounds as a senior and a good reputation, but Indiana really needs a center.

Even Person was surprised Indiana took him.

"I didn't figure Indiana would draft me fourth," Person said. "I figured they would take a big man unless Len Bias was available. I thought I would go high, but not this high."

Kenny Walker went high, but perhaps not as high as expected. The 6-8 Kentucky forward was taken by New York as the fifth overall pick. Then the Phoenix Suns followed up by taking 7-foot center William Bedford of Memphis State. Bedford, who can best be described as a Robert Parish type, will be the first true center the Suns have ever had.

That Bedford lasted so long was a surprise.

"I'm very surprised," Bedford said. "I heard a lot about going in the top three. I thought I would, but my thoughts don't count."

The Dallas Mavericks had been trying to send forward Mark Aguirre elsewhere, and didn't. They wound up taking Michigan center Roy Tarpley. One hot rumor had Aguirre and Tarpley going to the Lakers for James Worthy and Byron Scott or Michael Cooper.

The Mavs haven't made a trade --yet.

"I won't guarantee that Tarpley will be here to start the season," Mavs' director of player personnel Rick Sund said. "You never know in this business."

After Cleveland used its second-round pick to take Harper, the Bulls took 6-11 center/forward John Salley of Georgia Tech. Granted, the Bulls need a shot blocker and Salley is one, but a running mate to Michael Jordan is necessary, too. Duke's Johnny Dawkins wouldn't have been a bad choice.

San Antonio didn't think so. The Spurs used the 10th pick to draft the 6-2 wunderkind. Dawkins and Alvin Robertson have the makings of a pretty impressive backcourt.

The Bullets had to get another frontcourt player, and they selected undergraduate eligible John Williams of LSU. Williams is 6-8, 237 pounds, but can run and shoot as well as crash the boards.

The New Jersey Nets got the best pure point guard in the draft when they selected 6-3 Pearl Washington from Syracuse. A Brooklyn native, Washington should sell a few tickets as well as soup up the Nets running game.

Picking 14th, the Portland Trail Blazers selected St. John's forward Walter Berry, a prolific scorer in college, Berry's stock slipped considerably as the draft wore on. Whether Berry has the defensive skills necessary in the NBA is debatable -- everyone thinks he'll score plenty of points.

The Utah Jazz used the next selection to take a highly-regarded shooting guard, Dell Curry out of Virginia Tech. Curry might also be used at small forward a little.

"He makes shots from so far out, my players look to the bench, wanting to know what to do," Memphis State Coach Dana Kirk says.

Denver then got Maurice Martin of St. Joseph's a 6-6 guard expected to give the Nuggets the backcourt offense it lacks. Martin was another one of those players who was expected to go earlier than he did.

After the Sacramento Kings took Villanova guard/forward Harold Pressley the Kings really coveted Martin, but couldn't get to him) The Nuggets used their second first-round to grab 6-8 forward Mark Alarie of Duke. A strong, aggressive player, who can also shoot, Alarie is expected to be a representative NBA player.

The Atlanta Hawks took 6-7 forward Billy Thompson, who was summarily traded to the Lakers (along with Ron Kellogg) for swingman Mike McGee and the rights to center Ken Barlow, the Lakers first-round pick, 22nd overall.

The Houston Rockets are in

desperate need of a guard and well-stocked up front, which was very apparent in the championship series against the Celtics. So what do the Rockets do? Take forward Buck Johnson of Alabama.

"It fits with Houston trying to get the biggest team in the history of basketball," Red Auerbach cracked.

The Bullets added to their frontcourt group with 6-6 UNLV product Anthony Jones, a good wing player. Then the Bucks picked up a player Houston could use, Michigan State guard Scott Skiles. He's had all sorts of legal problems and is said to be a bit slow, but he can shoot and is a competitor.

But Skiles doesn't solve the Bucks' problems at center they may yet swing a deal for Golden State's Joe Barry Carroll, whom they tried to get last year.

After the Lakers took Barlow, the Blazers wrapped up the first round with the strangest pick of all. They took 7-2, 245-pound center Arvidas Sabonis of the Soviet National Team. Sabonis was drafted and unsigned by the Hawks a year ago. The reports on him, to pardon the pun, are glowing. But will the Blazers get him out of Russia?

We were interested in Sabonis," Auerbach said. "He's one of the top three or four centers in the world. He has size and can do it all. We knew all about him, I don't know how Portland will get him."

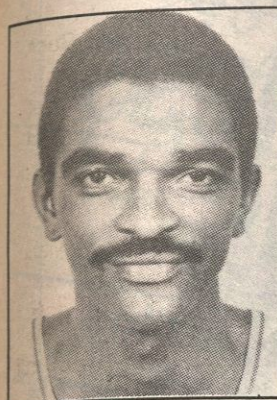
NBA people put the chances of Sabonis playing in the NBA as slim.

"I think you can get the head of the KGB out before you get him out," Knick general manager Scotty Stirling said.

DRAFT BITS AND PIECES: Daugherty compares his style to Kevin McHale's. "I see a lot of McHale's stuff in my game," Daugherty says. "Both our games are a little strange, but his arms are longer than mine"...Auerbach thinks Cleveland helped itself tremendously on draft day..."Cleveland did a very good job, he said. "Harper is a fine player and Daugherty can help them...The Blazers also took Greece's Panagiotis Fasoulas, who played at North Carolina State last year, and 6-5 guard Yugoslavian guard Dragan Petricic. They were drafted in the second and third rounds, respectively. "You've got to do a lot of strange things to put a team together," Hawks general manager Stan Kasten said. "This is one of them." The Hawks took two Soviets 6-10 Alexander Volkov and 6-9 Valerie Tikhonenko and an Italian, Augusto Binelli... The Mavericks traded the rights to guard Mark Price, the league's 25th pick, to Cleveland for a 1989 second-round pick...The Blazers swapped guard Steve Colter to the Bulls for the rights to Larry Krystkowiak, the 28th pick and more.



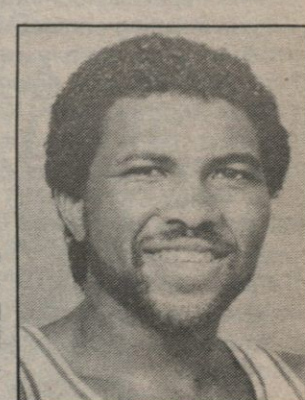
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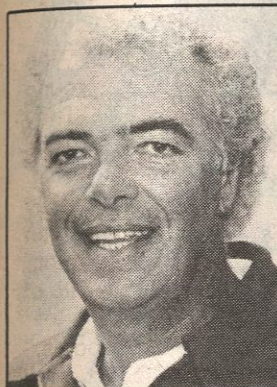
Ralph Sampson

Ralph Sampson, before Game 6, on the prospects of being the villain of the series: "Everybody has booed me... ever since I've been playing, you've had people coming at you. People doing this and people doing that and it's just a situation you've got to be in. All my life in basketball, in high school and in college, there have been times when people are going to come at you...it's happened before."

Robert Reid after he had helped hold Larry Bird to six 2nd half points in Game 3 106-104 Houston triumph: "You (the media) are making Rodney McCray's and my jobs very difficult. Without a doubt, he (Bird) will be more determined because you guys are giving him a lot of flak. I remember St. Patrick's Day last year when Bird scored 48. I was guarding him that day, too."



Robert Reid



Jimmy Rodgers

Jimmy Rodgers on Larry Bird's (29-point, 12-assist, 11-rebound) performance in Game 6: "It's hard to remember when Larry has played this hard, because Larry plays so hard so often. But I think in Game 6 he really moved it up another level."

"Larry has a great intuition, a great sense of knowing when something extra is needed at a given point, whether in a regular season game or in the playoffs. Larry fully understood the significance of what was going on today...we had a young talented team that was on momentum, and the Rockets were rolling. Larry had fire in his eyes because he knew today we had to give them that knockout punch. We didn't want to take a chance on a seventh game."

Jerry Sichting after the fight with Sampson: "When they threw him out of the game I thought I'd be the MVP of the game."

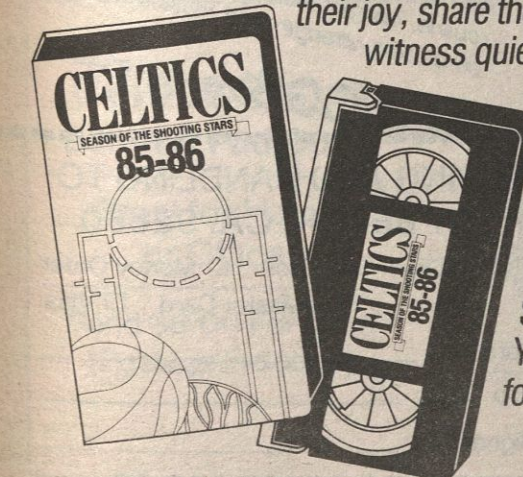


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Bill Walton Makes Family Contact

CONTACT. Its a common occurrence on an NBA basketball court and its especially common to see Bill Walton initiating contact whenever he crashes in to grab a rebound. But now that Bill has helped lead the Celtics to their 16th World Championship, he is making another type of CONTACT: FAMILY CONTACT.

FAMILY CONTACT is the name of Bill Walton's new home fitness video project completed this spring. FAMILY CONTACT is a new and unique exercise program that promotes family togetherness, fun and fitness.

"There are a lot of societal forces tugging on families these days, pulling them apart and a lot of kids are heading in the wrong direction," Bill remarked at the World Premiere of his FAMILY CONTACT video held at the Boston Garden the day after the Celts captured the title, "I did this video because it emphasizes sports, conditioning, fun and family togetherness."

The video has captured Bill and his wife Susie and their four boys, Adam, Nate, Luke and Chris participating in an interactive exercise program. The concept behind CONTACT is that two family members use CONTACT straps that allow them to hook up wrist to wrist, wrist to ankle or ankle to ankle and partner a series of exercises.

In essence two people hook up and become a human nautilus machine. One person provides the resistance to their partner's movement. It is very effective at increasing flexibility, muscle tone and strength.

Bill continued, "That's the great thing about this program. It allows me to spend quality time with my kids while helping them to keep fit. With only about a third of our country's kids able to pass the minimum physical fitness standards test, this is a real worthwhile project."

"I think its a great program for anyone, but especially parents and kids. The parents aren't just telling their kids what to do, they are interacting and participating with them. I really believe in the concept."

CONTACT was developed and tested by Doctors and Kinesiologists for Bill's Alma Mater, UCLA and is beneficial and safe and is an exceptional way to develop strong family bonds.

"I feel that we are moving back towards a family oriented society. I also feel that fitness and sports are a great substitute and deterrent to juvenile delinquency," Bill concluded. "Family contact is a reconfirmation of my belief in the importance in family unity and fitness and I hope it will help other families come closer together."

For more information on Bill Walton's FAMILY CONTACT, please call (714) 650-5435.



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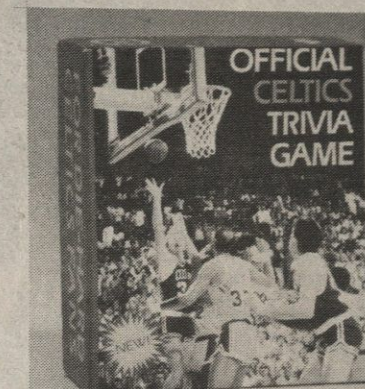
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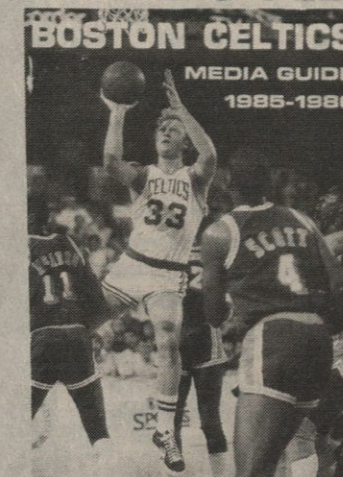


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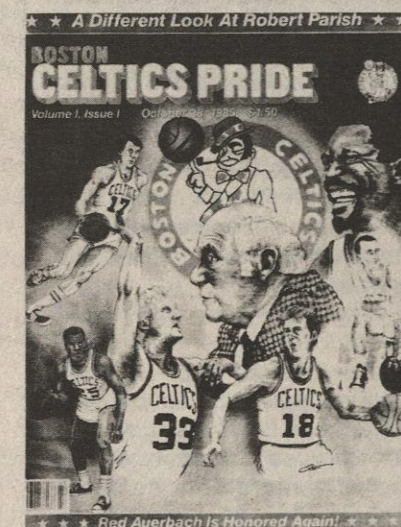
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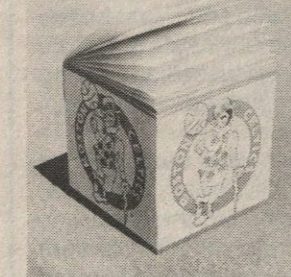
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Tradition Has Its Demands On Celtics

The Boston Celtics have arguably been more dominant in their respective sport than any team in history. When the Celtics polished off the Houston Rockets in game six of the NBA Championship Series, it marked the 16th time the Celtics have come away with all the NBA marbles.

It was the third championship the Celtics have won in the decade. From 1956-57 to '68-69, a 13-year period, Boston captured the NBA crown 11 times.

Indeed, the Celtics have a veritable NBA dynasty. But the road to it was long and winding. When the Celtics were first born in 1946-47, they weren't a particularly good team—they were pretty bad in fact. That inaugural season saw the finish with a 22-38 record, 27-games behind the first-place team.

The following year, Boston was 20-28. That showing was followed by marks of 25-35 and 22-46. In '49-50 (the 22-36 year), they were a whopping 36 games behind the front-runner.

And the Celtics problems were not limited to the court either. The team's financial statement was a proverbial sea of red ink— one never knew whether the team would survive from one day to the next. Owner Walter Brown did everything he could and then some to make sure the team stayed afloat, even putting a mortgage on his house to finance the team.



Red Auerbach: Put the Intangibles Together.

When did the franchise turn around? The first step toward respectability took place when then-unknown Red Auerbach was hired as head coach. The 32 year old had been

coach of the Washington Capitols, and had already earned a reputation as a sharp basketball mind.

Auerbach instilled a state of mind to the team—this Celtics Pride— which is still very much alive today.

"The intangible," Auerbach says. "Put enough of those intangibles together and you get some tangibles. Like victories and championships and people in the seats."

The championships didn't start coming until 1956, when Auerbach, through a series of clever machinations cleared the way for the Celtics to acquire Bill Russell. A skinny center from the University of San Francisco who starred on the 1956 Olympic team, Russell was seen by Auerbach as a franchise-builder (saver in this case), but not everyone saw it that way.

Rochester Royal general manager Leo Harrison said that Russell hadn't looked good in the college all-star game and might be too skinny to play in the NBA. The Royals wound up passing Russell and taking Sihugo Green instead. Auerbach wasn't complaining.

Russell joined the cast that included the likes of Cousy, Sharman, Heinsohn, Ramsey and the like. K.C. Jones, Sam Jones, Satch Sanders and many others were added to the brew as years went on, and the Celtics continued to roll.

Throughout that time, there were two constants. The first was that every player had only one purpose in

mind when they hit that floor: winning that game. Egos were left in the lockerroom, personal goals discounted and anything else that might detract from the big picture was eliminated. And there were no aberrations, either— you either did it the Celtics way, or you'd wind up at Tri-Cities or someplace.

The second constant was Auerbach. Despite all the great players the Celtics had, everyone knew there was one—and only one—boss. His name was Arnold.

"Basketball isn't a democracy," Auerbach says. "A coach can talk a lot, even yell. All that matters is what's absorbed by the players."

Says Dennis Johnson: "Mystique means doing anything you can to win. Or is that pride. It's just the feeling that the team concept is really appreciated here. The fans, the organization, the players. The people want to watch us play because they know we want to play. It's just like a state of mind I guess, that everyone shares."

Not everyone in the Boston area shared boundless enthusiasm for the Celtics, even during the 11 championships in 13 years era. It's only been within the last five years or so that the Celtics have become the number-one sports item in Boston, overtaking the Bruins.

Case on point: In 1961-62, the Celtics won the NBA championship. Their average attendance per game? 6,852. Even in Russell's first year, it was just 10,517. That's all changed, as the Celtics have sold out close to 300 home games in a row.

Then there's the Garden. Granted, it's not a state-of-the-art roundball place like Reunion Arena or the Richfield Coliseum. It's more like that banged up 1970 Chevy Impala that's your first car. It may have plenty of flaws, but it's charming and you love it.

Such is the case with Boston Garden, the lack of air condition makes those June playoff games take place under sauna-type conditions.

The lockerrooms are cramped and the neighborhood surrounding the Garden isn't exactly ultra-chic.

There has been talk that the Celtics will get a new arena sometime soon.

"We'd like it," Auerbach said. "But we all know Larry Bird ain't gonna play forever. What's it gonna be like after he retires? Bill Russell played the greatest basketball ever, and we won the championship almost every year. And there were only two times that Russ ever played to a Garden crowd of more than 10,000 people. Who's to say that won't happen again."

In any case, you can bet the Celtics will be back in the championship hunt next year. The tradition demands it.

Jones and Fitch: Round II

The return of Bill Fitch and the Houston Rockets to the championship series against the Celtics, coached by K.C. Jones, renewed a rivalry which encompassed dimensions greater than the games themselves. The rivalry between the men had reached its third stage; they coached against each other in one of the best 7-game playoffs ever, when Fitch coached Cleveland and Jones coached Washington in 1976. Later, Jones was an assistant under Fitch when the latter moved here from Cleveland to assume the head coaching position in 1979. Two men of completely different temperaments and styles clashed. The past season, as they coached against each other for the championship crown, marked stage three.

K.C. Jones for years was penalized because he was successful. Jones began coaching in the NBA in 1973-74 and immediately fashioned a championship unit out of a Washington team which was actually matchless pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Individual talent, yes. Team-ability? A void.

But after a 1st season of 47-35 and a 7-game playoff defeat to the Knicks, Jones molded a double low post attack of Wes Unseld and Elvin Hayes, and incorporated the penetration of Kevin Porter and the shooting of Phil Chenier. The following year: 60-22, best record in the NBA, but because of a scheduling conflict, a disastrous home schedule for the Finals against Golden State. On a roll, the Warriors, behind Rick Barry, swept, and Jones' job was in jeopardy. Others would have been rewarded for such achievements. Remember, Jones was in his 2nd season of coaching.

The Jone-Fitch drama shifts to Richfield, Ohio. Fitch, a bright, intense former collegiate mentor, had developed an expansive Cleveland Cavs team from a 15-67 1st season to a championship contender. The Cavs moved from downtown Cleveland to a beautiful arena outside the city, and they moved into 1st place in the Central Division in 1976, edging out Jones' Bullets on the final day of the regular season. Jones shrugs now when asked why his job was in jeopardy at that time. There was a trade the previous summer—Porter for the aged Dave Bing. There was a meddlesome front office. But, when Fitch's Cavs and Jones' Bullets met in the semi-final round of the playoffs that year, there was an added element of pressure of the 43-year old Bullet's coach.

The series, as mentioned, was a classic. Washington won Game 1 in Cleveland, 100-95, but Fitch's team regained the home court in Game 2. Bingo Smith canned a 30-footer at the buzzer for an 80-79 win; it was



K.C. Jones: A Taste of Revenge?

the first of three buzzer beating shots which delivered Cleveland wins. The teams held their home court advantage in the next two games; in Game 5, with the Bullets ahead 91-90, Washington forced Smith into a airball with a second to play, but Jim Clemons circled to the spot where it fell, laid the ball in, and Cleveland had saved its chance. The Bullets took Game 6 in Washington, 102-98, but lost the finale, 87-85.

Experts in Boston (Tom Heinsohn, then-coach; Bob Ryan) insist that Jones' team was the unit the eventual champion Celtics did not want to play that year. But the Cavs—and Fitch—had won. Soon after, Jones was fired.

He has said often since that he never thought, as time passed, he would ever coach in the league again.

Events brought the two men together in Boston. The Celtics, after winning in 1976, fell apart (Dave Cowens wore out without a backup center, Jo Jo White was injured, Sidney Wicks was allowed to hold out, John Havlicek was nearing retirement, the franchise was purchased by John Y. Brown). Red Auerbach, President and General Manager, outwaited the Brown disaster, drafted Larry Bird, and decided to bring in the first coach from "outside the family." Bill C. Fitch. The team needed a new approach, a textbook retooling, and Fitch, a master at conceptualizing a problem in its early stages, fit perfectly. K.C., who had rejoined the Celtics as a favor to Satch Sanders the latter coached in Boston in 1978-79, stayed on as Fitch's assistant.

Stage II of the rivalry; the men approached the game differently—Fitch watched films late into the night, depending on the extra time there to gain his winning edge, his confidence derived from preparation. Jones depended on instinct, hands-on work with the men in practice, communication. Ironically, and fatally for the men's relationship, the difference in approach blew up into an argument early in the team's first training camp under Fitch in 1979 (-80). The two argued while Jones was working with players about technique. Fitch resented what he perceived to be a threat

to his newly established coaching authority. After this incident, throughout the glory of the early Bird seasons, including the 1981 title, the men were able to work together, but never amicably or in harmony. When Fitch resigned in 1983, Jones (the time was correct for his style), having earned his appointment, has the dreamed-about Celtics' job.

Thus, the irony and rivalry intersected in the most recent Finals, as Fitch's masterfully rebuilt Rockets challenged what many view as the greatest team ever. The Celtics under Jones. Irony: In the Houston locker room, rock and soul music blared, a theme which Fitch censored when he was coaching here. In Boston's locker room, where music

had wafted earlier in the season, silence, laughter, and the game tapes were heard. Further irony: Fitch has compromised his position toward the seemingly perplexed Ralph Sampson, offering public support (and private) for a player who quite possibly is an improbable source of his team's 2nd place finish.

Because sweet sixteen had some elements of a taste of revenge for the Boston Coach Jones. A key reason for Boston's greatest-ever tag? Jones. He is a masterful game-coach, an insightful offensive game-designer, and his defensive awareness is Hall of Fame material. He won the rematch with Fitch—an important game victory as both men were aiming for their 2nd NBA title.

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